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OR, THE

CHICAGO CROOK'S DEAL

THE MYSTERY OF
THE MILLIONAIRE MINER.

CHAPTER I.
THE NIGHT TRAGEDY.

The great fresh-water sea known as Lake Superior was surging and heaving under the effects of a heavy wind, and night hung like a pall over the waters.

It was a fit night for the commission of an awful crime, and the many passengers on board the Lake Queen, a

"I WILL WATCH THAT MAN," THOUGHT TOM TUNNEL, AS HE WENT TO BREAKFAST.

large-sized steamer, drew close together and spoke in low, apprehensive tones as the boat pitched and tossed upon the troubled bosom of the lake.

The discussion as to the probabilities of a violent and perhaps dangerous storm overtaking the craft was broken in upon by an alarming cry that always sends a thrill through even the bravest heart in the fairest of weather.

The cry was: "Man overboard!"

William Armor sprang from his seat in the cabin and hurried to the deck above.

The flying spray was dashed in the young man's face as he gained the upper deck and gazed upon the foam-crested waves.

"Lower a boat, quick!"

Several of the sailors obeyed this order with alacrity. William Armor was one of the first in the craft, although he was only a passenger on the steamer.

Boxes and barrels were flung over, and then a silent waiting fell upon the crew and passengers.

"Mighty little chance for a man out yonder."

A low voice uttered this, in the hearing of the captain.

"Not one chance in a thousand," answered the commander.

"Who was it?"

"Can't tell you."

The boom of the warring elements alone held all other sounds for the time. The good ship trembled, and the rigging creaked in the howling blast. The engines had been reversed, and in silence the passengers and crew awaited the return of the small boat.

It came at length, and the little craft, with its soaked crew, was hoisted on board.

No one had been found.

"Who is lost?"

Again this question went up.

William Armor went below.

"Oh, Will, where is papa?"

A pair of blue eyes looked into the face of the young man, while a white, beautiful, girlish face was upturned to his.

"Your father—is he not with you?"

"No."

"Perhaps he is on deck. The cry of man overboard attracted many above."

At that instant, however, a peculiar thrill shot to the heart of the young voyager. He remembered seeing Mr. Ward standing by the rail but a short time previous to the cry that startled all to the deck.

"Papa was not here when that awful cry went up. Oh, Will! if—if it should be papa that—"

"Hush, Laura! I will go and find your father," William interrupted, gently pushing the maiden to a seat and turning away.

There was a terrible misgiving in the young man's heart, however, for he was now more than half convinced that it was Mr. Ward who had gone over the side of the steamer into the lake. If so, the old millionaire had gone to a watery grave, leaving little blue-eyed Laura possessor of all his millions. But William thought not of this as he made his way above, where the captain was collecting crew and passengers for the purpose of ascertaining who was lost.

After the young man was gone, a face peered into the cabin and a pair of glittering eyes were fixed for a moment on the pale and trembling Laura Ward.

"Poor child! her father is gone fast enough," muttered the owner of the gleaming eyes, "and it was not an accidental mishap, either. I heard enough to convince me that a crime had been committed. Well, Tom Tunnel, you have more on your hands than you bargained for. A new mystery to fathom. So let it be. Perhaps I shall be able to kill two birds with one stone."

The sound of steps coming down the stairs interrupted the man's musing.

"Hello! man. You're wanted above," and a hand fell on the shoulder.

Two pairs of eyes gleamed at each

other. One pair full of keen, penetrating light, the other glittering with elation and cunning.

For a long time after Tom Tunnel remembered that pair of cunning, triumphant eyes, and it gave him a clew.

He lost the clew that night, however!

The man's hand slipped from the detective's shoulder, and the next instant he was gone.

Tom Tunnel was journeying to the Lake Superior region on a little affair of his own, when his keen perceptions caught on to a new deal in the game.

He was well satisfied when he went on deck that a crime had been committed, and then and there the noted detective had resolved that he had struck a fresh trail, which he would follow to the end.

The list of passengers was called by the captain's clerk, and all answered save two—Harry Ward and Laura, his daughter.

"Miss Ward is in the cabin," announced William Armor.

"And her father?"

"Is not there."

An instant of painful silence, and then—

"Harry Ward is the man overboard!" fell from the captain's lips.

"And that's the last of him."

"I fear so," said Will, with a heavy heart.

"Back to your stations, every man of you!" commanded the captain; and then, save for the few most deeply interested, the episode of the night was forgotten.

With a heavy heart young Armor went back to the cabin to meet the questioning gaze of Laura Ward.

She did not faint when Will told her the terrible truth, but only crossed her hands on Will's shoulder, and with the words: "Oh, William!" she laid her head against his manly breast and wept unrestrainedly. These tears were good for the poor child. They saved her from a deeper pain, perhaps a fatal illness. It was nature's method of soothing the bleeding heart of the grief-stricken girl.

Some time later Will went again on deck. The storm had somewhat abated, and as the young man stood by the rail, gazing out on the gloomy waters, a sense of deep unrest possessed him.

"What will Laura do now; alone in a strange land?"

This was the thought that found expression in low-muttered words. Almost on the instant a hand was laid on his shoulder.

He turned, and marked the outlines of a man before him—a man rather undersized, yet with a pair of eyes so sharp that their gleam was felt even in the darkness.

"You are William Armor?" questioned the stranger.

"Yes."

"You were acquainted with the man lost overboard to-night?"

"I was, somewhat."

"What sort of a man was he?"

Will wondered at this close questioning, but he returned the answer:

"A gentleman, very wealthy, very proud, and one not easily approached. Why do you ask these questions?"

"I have a motive that will harm no honest man," answered the stranger. "Will you answer a few more questions?"

"If I can."

"That is satisfactory. How long had Mr. Ward been on deck ere he fell into the lake?"

"About half an hour, if his daughter Laura remembers rightly. He went up to enjoy a smoke with a friend. He did not mind the wind—the old man had once followed the sea—and it gave him pleasure to look upon the high rolling waves and listen to the crash of the storm."

"Yes—but this friend? Who was he?"

"I do not know."

A short silence followed.

Will could feel the stranger's eyes

piercing him through and through. He shifted his position and looked away.

Again the stranger—Tom Tunnel, the detective—touched Will's arm.

"Mr. Armor, was this man Ward one likely to fall into the sea?—you say he was an old sailor?"

"I confess it does seem a little strange," agreed William. "I know old Ward was not easily thrown off his sea legs, and the vessel was not rolling badly. Yes, it is strange that the old gentleman should have fallen overboard."

"Exactly," muttered Tom Tunnel. "Between you and me, Will, he did not fall overboard."

"Eh?"

The detective felt the young man start and tremble under his touch.

"Harry Ward did not fall overboard," again asserted Tom Tunnel, still keeping his hand on the arm of the young voyager.

"What do you mean?"

"Harry Ward was stabbed and hurled into the water!"

The lips of the speaker were bent to the ear of young Armor, and the words were sent with hissing emphasis to the startled brain of the young traveler.

"Murdered?" gasped Will, reeling back against the rail as though stricken by a blow.

CHAPTER II.

THE DETECTIVE—SHADOWED. SHADOWED.

"Aye, murdered!" asserted Tom Tunnel, a feeling of elation, of keen triumph filling his heart, as he realized that, perhaps, even now he had his hand on the assassin.

William Armor was unable to speak for some moments. The other's information, or rather assertion, quite startled and weakened the youth for the time.

Was it the consciousness of guilt that so overwhelmed Will?

"My soul!" finally gasped Armor, "this cannot be! Harry Ward had not an enemy in the world. Who would wish to kill him?"

"Who would be benefited by the old millionaire's death?" queried Tom Tunnel, solemnly.

"No one."

"Are you sure?"

"I am. Laura was the only child."

"Perhaps she had a lover?"

Again Will started, and trembled. His emotion did not escape the notice of the other. He felt that he was on the right track, yet, at the same time, he was not the man to take such things for granted. He must have ample proof ere he proceeded to open accusation.

"You have not answered my question," said Tom Tunnel, at length.

"No; I cannot answer it."

"Why not?"

"Because I do not know whether Laura had lovers or not. I think not, however."

"I suppose you made no pretensions in that direction?"

"I?"

"Yes, *you*, William Armor!"

"Sir, I refuse to be questioned further," and, with the air of one in quick anger, the young voyager tore himself loose and walked away.

For some moments the lake detective stood by the rail in a musing attitude.

"So! so!" he muttered; "the young chap pretends to be indignant the moment I begin to tread close on his steps. Well, I'm thinking he is the man. I know that the old millionaire was foully dealt with, and if this was my first year in the business of man hunting I should at once conclude that this Will Armor was the guilty man. I'm not sure of it, however, and it is not wise to jump to hasty conclusions." Tom Tunnel walked away, and in a little time stood in the light of a lamp that glowed near the pilot-house.

As he halted he caught the glow of a pair of keen eyes fixed upon him. Those eyes he had seen before. There was no mistaking their snake-like glow or the

depth of cunning that lurked there. The eyes belonged to the man who had summoned him above, an hour before.

They were not the eyes of Will Armor, but whose?

Tom Tunnel determined to know.

He glided forward quickly, and struck out sharply with his hand, but did not touch the owner of the eyes.

"Ha-ha-ha!" came a low, mocking laugh.

He had been foiled, but stepped forward into the shadows, peered into the wheel-house, and saw that the steersman was busily engaged with his duties.

Where had the man with the evil eyes gone? Tom could not say, and he proceeded to the cabin.

Laura had retired to her state-room, from whence an occasional sob and moan came, to tell the fact that the maiden still suffered the bitterest agony over the loss of her parent.

The detective met Will Armor at the foot of the stairs.

One glance into the young man's white face was sufficient to show Tom that he was not recognized. The detective was dressed in an ordinary suit of clothes, and being undersized and rather insignificant looking, none on the Lake Queen suspected that he was one of the most noted detectives in the West.

Tom Tunnel scanned the face of young Armor closely, as he paced the floor with evident agitation.

"Is he guilty?"

This question was continually uppermost in the mind of the detective. It was a question he was not yet ready to answer.

At length Will looked at Tom—looked him square in the eye.

"Young man, you're in trouble," said the detective, plucking at the short, gray beard which was used to disguise the lower part of his face.

"Yes, in deep trouble," admitted William, after a moment's hesitancy.

"Can I help you in any way?"

"I think not," grimly. "Are you acquainted in Marquette and Ishpeming?"

"Well. Are you going to those towns?"

"The boat lands at Marquette," observed the young man. "I shall disembark there now."

"Now?"

"Yes. I meant to continue on to l'Aul, but now I shall stop at Marquette and look after Miss Ward until she arrives safely at her destination."

"Certainly, she will need some one, and I think you would please her better, perhaps, than any other person. I stop at Marquette, and if I can be of the least assistance command me."

"I will."

Will Armor resumed his nervous walk across the floor, while the detective retired to his room.

Why was it, the reader will ask, that Tom Tunnel, should suspect foul play when the cry of "man overboard" rang through the ship.

The question can be answered in a few words.

Tom Tunnel, as he was called, had watched the movements of two persons on the boat since leaving Detroit, and he had made a discovery during that time.

William Armor was certainly desperately in love with Laura, the millionaire's daughter, and to the detective it was plain to be seen that she was not indifferent to him.

Another fact was equally plain; the old mine-owner did not like Will, and frowned on his suit for Laura's hand. To the keen-eyed detective this was apparent.

On one occasion Tom Tunnel had heard the two men quarreling; high words passed between them, and the detective thus knew that all was not harmony with the love affairs of the young people. All that he had seen and heard came back to Tom Tunnel with tenfold force with the disappearance of the millionaire.

The detective had that evening stood by the rail, not twenty feet from two men who were conversing in low tones, when one of them suddenly departed, and, two minutes later, Tom was startled by a low cry, the purport of which was such as to prove beyond a doubt that a murder had been committed.

"Will—Will, don't kill me!"

In a husky gurgle came the words, yet plainly audible to the sharp ears of the detective. The words were immediately followed by a dull thud; then a body was flung over the rail into the water. The next moment a man darted from the rail and was lost to view. In attempting to follow him Tom Tunnel slipped and fell.

As he regained his feet he shouted "Man overboard!" and soon all was commotion on board the steamer.

What followed the reader knows.

When Tom Tunnel drew on his clothing the next morning and started to leave the state-room, his quick eye caught a bit of folded paper, which had been thrust under the door. He quickly picked it up, and, unfolding it, read:

"Mr. Detective—You're on the wrong scent this time, but let me warn you that if you don't keep your nose out of my affairs you'll get the worst of it. I am in dead earnest and mean business. W. A."

"W. A.," muttered the detective with a frown. "That stands for William Armor, of course."

Tom Tunnel stood for some moments in a thoughtful attitude. He did not consider the threat conveyed in the note; he had met such things before; but he was studying the motive of the one who sent the warning.

At length he seemed to arrive at a conclusion, and a smile swept his face.

"This helps to lift a load from my mind, for I like Will," muttered Tom. "The assassin has overshot the mark this time. This proves to me, if it proves anything, that Will Armor is not the man who murdered Harry Ward, and that the real assassin is very anxious I should think Will the guilty man. It proves also that I am spotted."

There was a significant emphasis in the detective's last words.

The note informed him that he was known, and that he must be on his guard if he, too, would not follow Harry Ward.

"It's the man with the snake-like eyes. I've met him twice; that is, his eyes," muttered Tunnel, crumpling the note in his hand and thrusting it in his pocket as he passed from his state-room.

The storm had abated and the sun was smiling upon the lake with its still furrowed bosom, when Tom came on deck.

He saw nothing of Will, and, producing his cigar, puffed leisurely as he leaned idly against the rail. Of a sudden, however, he started nervously, and looked about him to see a pair of snake-like eyes, full of cunning and deceit, fixed upon him.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN WITH THE BALEFUL EYES.

"Ah, good-morning, sir."

Detective Tunnel looked in some surprise into the face of the man before him—a tall, stout man, with gray beard, and a stoop in his shoulders, his face shadowed by a broad-brimmed hat.

There was nothing evil-looking about the man save his eyes.

He held out his hand and grinned good-naturedly.

"Good-morning," answered Tunnel, as he took the proffered hand, a large one, and shut down upon it with an iron grip.

The stranger continued to smile, however, and did not seem to mind the detective's savage clasp.

"The hasty storm is over, I reckon."

"I reckon so," assented Tom.

"Goin' ter Marquette?"

"Perhaps."

The detective resumed his cigar, and

looked once more out upon the blue bosom of Superior.

"Stranger in these parts?" persisted the man.

"Somewhat."

"Mebbe you wouldn't mind tellin' your name?"

"Not at all. Sam Jackson's the handle I wear."

Tom turned his keen glance once more on the face of his interlocutor, and caught again that cunning gleam of the eye. This soon faded, however, when the man discovered that he was being keenly scrutinized.

He laughed and said:

"A real good name. I like the sound of it. A most sing'ler thing, ain't it, that my name's Jackson, too?"

"Your name Jackson?"

"Yes; Billy Jackson, from Jericho."

The detective laughed, tossed his cigar away, and went into the cabin, as the bell had rung for the morning meal.

Who was Billy Jackson?

Tom Tunnel did not remember seeing the man before this morning. He was more than half inclined to believe that the fellow was in disguise.

He certainly had those piercing, snake-like eyes that had so strangely haunted him since the previous night.

"I will watch that man," thought Tom Tunnel, as he went to breakfast.

He expected Billy Jackson to come in to the table, but he did not, and the strangest part of it was, the old fellow did not materialize again during the day.

"The fellow keeps mighty dark, seems to me," muttered the detective.

Late in the day Detective Tunnel met William Armor on the deck. He was looking pale and worn; evidently he had passed a sleepless night.

"How is Miss Ward to-day?" queried Tom Tunnel.

"Ill."

"That is bad. I hope it is nothing serious?"

"I do not know. It's terrible, Mr. Jackson."

"Yes," admitted the detective.

He was eyeing the young man sharply, endeavoring to satisfy himself as to the guilt or innocence of Will Armor. The case puzzled him exceedingly. He was sure that the wealthy mine-owner had been murdered, but to prove this, and also to fix the crime upon the guilty person, was, he realized, a most difficult task.

"It would have been very sad, even had the death of Mr. Ward been purely accidental," pursued the detective; "but—"

"Man, hold!" cried William Armor, turning rather fiercely upon the detective. "You must never intimate again that Mr. Ward was murdered. A mere suspicion of such a thing amounts to nothing, and I believe you have no proof."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because—because—well, I know you have none," stammered Will, in a tone of desperation.

"He shows guilt," thought Tom Tunnel. "I will probe him a little further."

"William Armor, as I said once before, Mr. Ward was stabbed and thrown into the lake, and by the man who would be most benefited by such a move. I can swear to this."

"Can you?" with an incredulous look.

"Yes. I was near when the deed was done."

"Ha!" and Will turned quickly, almost fiercely, upon Tom Tunnel, seizing him by the arms, clinching them in a grip of steel, while his white teeth gleamed, and a fierce glow shot from his eyes. "You were near—perhaps you wielded the knife!"

But the detective did not quail under the fierce glance and fierce words of the young man.

"Look out, Will Armor. You are giving yourself dead away!" warned Tom Tunnel, sharply.

Will reeled back, his face growing white as death.

"My God! what do you mean?"

"This, young man," uttered the detective, in a thrilling whisper, as he bent his lips close to the face of his companion, "I have evidence that convicts you as the murderer of Harry Ward. I have but to say the word, and you go to prison the moment you set foot on dry land."

Will Armor seemed quite overcome. He stood trembling and cowering before the detective like the veriest criminal, and for a moment the keen-eyed detective was almost persuaded to bring the affair to a conclusion by arresting Will at once.

Tom Tunnel was not the one to move without sufficient evidence, however. The actions of Will Armor were those of a guilty man, and yet, in spite of all, the detective was in gravest doubt, and then to arrest Will would shut out investigation in another direction, perhaps.

He thought then of the sinister, serpent eyes.

These Will did not possess.

"Will Armor," said Tom Tunnel, solemnly, taking one of the young voyager's hands in his, "this is a terrible affair, and now I ask you what you *guilty?*"

It was a strange, perhaps foolish, question to ask, yet the detective felt inspired to utter the words, and a moment after he saw the wisdom of his course.

Will looked at him, a deep glow suffusing his pallid face, and said, in husky accents:

"No, no, no! as God hears me, I did not harm Harry Ward! Why should I stain my soul with such a crime?"

There was such a deep fervency in the words, such honest, heartfelt earnestness, as to carry conviction to the heart of Tom Tunnel.

"Will, I believe you," he said, with frankness. "Now, then, I want your confidence."

"You shall have it, sir," asserted Will, with prompt assent.

"Doubtless you have suspected ere this my calling?"

"You are a detective?"

"Yes."

"Your name is not Jackson, but—"

"Call me Jackson; it will do for the present," interrupted the detective. "Of course I did not come up the lakes to watch over the destinies of the Wards, but on an errand of my own. I have become suddenly interested in this case, however, and I want your assistance, William Armor."

"In securing the murderer of Mr. Ward?"

"Yes."

"You shall have it. My time shall be devoted to the solving of the mystery that surrounds the disappearance of the mine-owner."

"To me it is not a mystery," answered Tom Tunnel. "The old gentleman was foully murdered, and his assassin is now on this boat."

"Let us find him at once."

"That will be difficult."

"What, if he is on the boat?"

"Yes, even then. How are we to know our man?"

"Sure enough; how are we to know?"

"To tell the truth," went on Tom, "I have pretty strong evidence against you, almost strong enough, though entirely circumstantial, to convict."

"Good heavens! you do not mean that?"

"I do, most certainly."

Will was dumbfounded.

"It is well known that you quarreled with Mr. Ward, that he frowned on your suit for his daughter's hand, and that bad blood existed. The motive you thus had; and, what is more, the murdered man himself believed that William Armor was his assassin."

"My soul! what do you mean?"

"I mean that you and Mr. Ward stood by the rail talking, with the roar of the winds about you, last night, but a few minutes before he was hurled overboard—"

"Yes, that is true," admitted Will. "I went to the cabin, and had been seated but a few minutes, when the cry of 'man overboard' startled me, and I came hurrying on deck."

"Yes; well, but a few minutes after your departure a man stepped up to Harry Ward, plunged a knife into his bosom, and then lifted and hurled him into the water. As he went over, he cried in a voice of entreaty: 'Oh, Will—Will! don't kill me!' I heard that."

A groan fell from the young man's lips. He was unable to speak, and turning quickly, hurried away.

In the dusk of evening the Lake Queen approached the wharf at Marquette. The lights of the city gleamed brightly in the distance. Soon the steamer came to its moorings, the plank rattled down, and a crowd of passengers hastened to the dock.

Tom Tunnel was just stepping upon the dock, when he felt a hot breath upon his cheek.

"Tom Tunnel, if you continue your present course, you shall surely die! Beware!"

The words were hissed in the detective's ear. He looked up, and caught the gleam of a pair of cunning serpent eyes, glowing from beneath a slouched hat; then the man was gone, lost in the crowd and the dusk of night.

"Those eyes again!" uttered the detective, not a little startled at what he had seen and heard.

"The mystery deepens, but my man is in Marquette, and I will trail him to his doom!"

CHAPTER IV.

WILL ARMOR HAS AN INTERVIEW AND SURPRISE.

Some years had elapsed since Tom Tunnel last visited the Marquette mining region, and consequently many changes had been wrought during the time. The town had grown wonderfully, and many of the streets were new to the detective.

He believed he would find his man, the assassin of Harry Ward, in Marquette, and had resolved on staying in the place some days.

He went immediately to the principal hotel, and registered as Sam Jackson, of Saginaw.

He glanced about the room keenly.

Perhaps he expected to see the man with the snake-like orbs; if so, he was disappointed. The late story was the subject of conversation. A man had come in with the news that Harry Ward, the wealthy mine-owner, had been drowned in the lake, and the news created no little stir.

"Great Caesar! but it'll be a bad loss to the lake country," averred the landlord. "I don't see how we can spare the old man."

"It'll leave the gal well fixed," suggested a red-nosed individual, who sat in one corner smoking a pipe, his chair tilted back in the approved fashion.

"You bet!"

"Spect it'll damage the mining business?"

"No," assumed the landlord. "Charles Stratton will run the thing just the same."

"The old man's partner?"

"Yes."

"There's a good deal of vim about Charles Stratton," declared one of the men present.

"Yaas," remarked a lank specimen of the New Englander, "but Charles warn't nowhere 'longside of the old gent fur business. Bet the hull thing'll bust up now; see if it don't."

But no one was found to agree with the Yankee.

"Jest the same, you'll find thar's a screw loose in ther business somewhar," asserted the man from the East.

"You's allus croaking," put in another voice.

The detective sat an interested listener

to the conversation. So Mr. Ward had a partner! This was news to Tunnel, and might have a bearing on the case he was about to work up.

A train left Marquette for the West after the boat came in, and William Armor and Laura boarded this and proceeded to Ishpeming, where the Wards had lived during the past year, and where the orphaned girl would meet friends.

The girl had spent but one year of her life in the Superior country, her father preferring to keep her at school in Detroit, where he had a splendid residence, over which Laura queened it with gentle yet supreme power.

Charles Stratton's sister had kept the Ishpeming house in order, and the two lived there during the absence of Ward and his daughter. It was a sorrowful meeting between Mr. Stratton and Laura at midnight in the depot at Ishpeming.

Miss Stratton at once took Laura in charge, Will being summarily dismissed, and carried her home in the family carriage.

It was in the depot on this night that William Armor met the junior partner of the firm of Ward & Co. for the first time. To see Charles Stratton was to dislike him. At any rate, this was true with Will. The mine-owner was tall and slender, with intensely blue eyes, light beard and hair. His age could not have been far from forty, and he dressed with faultless taste.

He had a smooth way and quiet smile that was attractive to some, but not to William, who felt that he could read the word hypocrite written all over the man's gentle face.

It was possible for Will to be mistaken, however, in his estimate of the man.

"If you will come over to the house you will be rewarded for your services, young man," said Mr. Stratton, as the ladies entered the carriage.

The mine-owner signed for the man to drive on, and the carriage rolled away, leaving Will and Charles Stratton on the depot platform, under the light of the lamps overhead.

"What do you mean?" asked Will, a little dazed, and not fully comprehending.

"I mean that I haven't any money with me," said Mr. Stratton, gently.

"Money! who said anything about money?"

"But you have rendered us a service. Miss Ward feels extremely grateful, and I would pay you for your trouble."

"Scoundrel! what do you mean by offering me money?" cried Will, all on fire with righteous wrath.

The mine-owner reeled back, and held up one hand deprecatingly.

"Don't, young man, I implore you!" gasped the astonished millionaire. "I thought you needed money; I did really."

"... for anything I may do for humanity in distress!" uttered Will, hotly. "I don't want any of your gold, old man. I may call at the house to-morrow, however."

"Do, by all means. Would be most happy to see you there."

The mine-owner was about to depart, when Will laid his hand on his thin shoulder.

"See here, old fellow, do you know how Mr. Ward came to his death?"

"He fell overboard during the storm," answered the partner. "Purely an accidental affair, yet very sad, indeed. I feel that I shall be obliged to fill the father's place, as far as possible, to poor Laura. It's an awful blow to her."

Tears actually came to the eyes of the speaker, but Will was in a practical mood now, and did not notice them.

"Your partner came to his end by foul means, old man," returned Will.

"What do you mean?"

"He was murdered!"

"Impossible!"

Again Mr. Stratton threw up his hand, while a deep pallor came to his face. He held his hand for a moment aloft, as if

he would ward off some menacing danger, and then he dropped it again to his side.

"Not impossible, but a fact," asserted Will, who had come to believe fully in the detective's story, and seemed as anxious as possible to secure the assassin.

"But, good heavens! this is awful."

"Awful, yet true!" asserted Will.

"Good gracious! I can't believe it," proceeded Mr. Stratton. "Why was not this telegraphed me? I do not understand it at all."

"No. I suppose not. It was not generally understood that Mr. Ward was murdered, but I know that such was the case, and it is your duty to ferret out the perpetrator of the crime."

"Certainly, certainly, if a crime has been committed."

And Mr. Stratton rubbed his hands together sharply.

He looked at Will with incredulity marked plainly on his mild countenance, however.

"A crime has been committed, and you must place a detective on the track at once."

"Well, well, this is terrible. Come up to the house to-morrow, Mr. Armor, and I will consult with you on the subject."

"I will."

Then Mr. Stratton hurried away up the street.

Will stood for some moments, immovable, looking after the fast receding form of the millionaire.

"It'll be like squeezing a dead tree for sap to attempt getting money out of that man," muttered Will.

"You're right, pard."

William started and whirled around. Unconsciously he had uttered his words aloud. As he looked about a dark form was gliding into the shadow of the depot.

Quickly Will sprang forward, but when he reached the corner no one was to be seen. Just then he glanced up at the window, and started violently when he beheld a pair of gleaming eyes peering through the glass at him.

Will gained the inside of the depot at a few bounds; but only the station agent met his gaze as he glared about the naked room.

CHAPTER V.

WAS "THE FLOATER" THE LOST MILLIONAIRE?

"Great Caesar! Pete! look there!"

Two men stood on the lake shore, glancing along the smooth surface of the water, that was scarcely rippled by the breeze that fanned their cheeks from the southeast.

Both men were bearded, stout-looking fellows, clad in coarse garments befitting their calling of fishermen. The man addressed shaded his eyes with one heavy hand and glanced out on the green waters of old Superior.

What did he see?

Something that caused him to utter an exclamation.

"Well, Pete, what is it?"

"A floater, or I'm a liar, John."

"It's coming this way."

"Yes, and we'll soon see what the thing is."

The two men moved down nearer to the water's edge, and watched, without speaking, the slowly moving object.

Fully half an hour elapsed ere the object came up against the sand at the feet of the two fishermen. The two stout men stooped then, and dragged the object high up on the sand.

A bloated, disfigured body that was not pleasant to contemplate. The corpse was well clad, and the gray hair indicated a man well along in years.

"Where d'ye s'pose it came from, Pete?"

"Hard to tell. Mebbe, though, it was some poor feller that was lost in the storm two weeks ago."

"Mebbe."

The point on the shore where the two

fishermen stood was some miles north of Marquette, and a long distance from any human habitation.

The first thing to be done was to go through the man's pockets. A leather wallet was found, containing a few dollars in silver and gold. There were papers, also, which were so thoroughly soaked as to be valueless, and these the two men flung into the lake.

"Pretty good find," grunted one of the rough fellows.

"I think the best thing we can do is to plant this up 'bove high-water mark and leave it."

"Mebbe he has friends."

"Mebbe, but wot's the odds ef he has? He wouldn't know 'em now, I reckon, ef they'd all come along at this minnit."

"No, and none of them would know him," and the speaker pointed at the swollen, disfigured face.

"That's so, pard. We'd best plant it, and say no more about it."

The two agreed to this, and bearing the corpse to a place far up out of reach of the waves, they deposited it, while one of them went to the little shanty some rods distant, where nets, lines, and various sorts of fishing tackle might be seen, within and without. Procuring spade and shovel, the man returned to his companion.

Both fell to work, and in a little time they had a shallow grave scooped from the earth.

No coffin, but a coarse blanket was wrapped about the silent form of the dead, and then the men were about to roll it into the grave, when the sound of a step and a voice held their hands.

"Hello, boys! what have you there?"

An under-sized man, with a pair of deep-set, keen eyes, stood before the fishermen.

The reader has met the man before.

It was Tom Tunnel, the detective.

He had been out some days looking along the shore of the lake, hoping to find the body of the murdered millionaire, and by the merest chance come upon the two fishermen as we have seen.

"Hello!" exclaimed John, springing up and looking fixedly at the stranger.

"What have you there?"

"Can't you see?"

"It's a dead body, I judge," answered Tunnel.

"It ain't a live one," grunted Pete.

"No, it seems not. Did you kill the man?"

"I reckon not," answered John, gruffly. "Would you like ter look at the corpse?"

"I would."

The blanket was removed, and Tom Tunnel gazed into the face of the dead.

No chance for recognizing anything human in the repulsive countenance, but the clothing looked familiar, and the detective at once decided that the body was that of the murdered millionaire.

He was not the one to take anything for granted, however.

Kneeling beside the bloated corpse, the detective proceeded to make an examination, but he found nothing to show that the man had met with violence.

The detective was not fully satisfied, however.

Both hands of the corpse were clinched, a fact that attracted the notice of Tunnel. With some difficulty he pried them open. Grasped in the right hand was something not to be passed lightly by.

It was a scarf-pin of gold, shaped like a harpoon.

At once Tom Tunnel jumped to the conclusion that this pin had been torn from the breast of the man who flung his victim into the lake.

Tunnel secreted the pin on his person, resolving to examine it at some future time.

The next thing was to identify the body as that of the murdered millionaire; this the detective could not do.

The two fishermen watched the movements of the stranger with not a little curiosity pictured on their faces.

At length Tom Tunnel rose to his feet, having completed his examination.

"I think I know the man," he said, addressing one of the fishermen.

"Do, eh? Friend of yours?"

"Yes. Have you any claim against the body?"

"None."

"You have a boat?"

"Yes."

"Would you earn a few dollars?"

"We're always willin' when there's money in the case," said Pete. "Wot ye want?"

"I want this body taken to Marquette."

"When?"

"At once."

"We're yer huckleberries; eh, John?"

"You just bet we are."

"How much will you give us? It's no nice job, remember," put in Pete, quickly.

"No. I will give you twenty dollars apiece, which will enable you to remain over night and purchase all the new fishing tackle you chance to need. Is it a bargain?"

"It's a bargain."

"When can you get to Marquette pier?"

"Before night."

"It is well."

Detective Tunnel drew out his wallet and paid each man ten dollars, promising to pay them the balance when they reached the city.

"Will you go with us?"

"No. I can return quicker by land," said Tom. "I wish to reach the city in advance, as I have some work to do before you come."

"Just as you like."

"It makes no difference to us."

The fishermen rolled the corpse in the blanket once more, and then bore it down to the water's edge, after which one of them went down the shore some rods, where he found a good-sized skiff on the sand. This he launched and paddled to the spot where the body of the millionaire awaited embarkation. Soon the two stout men tumbled the corpse into the boat, and then they pushed off, and began rowing out into the lake.

During all this time the detective stood on the bluff alone, watching the two men. When they rowed out into the lake he seemed satisfied, and, turning on his heel, walked away.

"I am glad the body has been found," uttered Tom Tunnel, as he moved rapidly from the spot. "I had little faith when I set out on the search, and my reward is greater than I expected. Of course I am not certain it is the body of Harry Ward, and it will require some of his friends to identify him. I must get a telegram into the hands of Charles Stratton in time for him to take the train for Marquette to-night, if possible."

Two miles from the lake shore Tom Tunnel came upon an Indian pony, on whose back he had ridden to the vicinity of the fishermen's house.

CHAPTER VI.

DETECTIVE TOM CONFRONTS A NEW DANGER.

It was late in the day, and Charles Stratton sat in his office smoking and looking over the latest Detroit papers, when a boy entered and announced:

"Telegram, sir."

The mine-owner took the brown envelope and tore it open with cool deliberation. Telegrams had in them no terrors for him, although it was scarce a fortnight since one came announcing the untimely death of his partner in business.

This is what he read:

"Mr. Ward's body found. Come on first train. S. J."

The messenger boy had vanished, and as the mine-owner glanced from the bit of paper, he found himself alone.

"Ah, so the body has been washed ashore," he muttered. "Wonder if any marks of violence were found on it? I really hope that young William Armor's

suspensions may prove untrue. It would be much better that it was an accident."

Stratton drew out his watch, an elegant gold repeater, and consulted it.

"Only twenty minutes before the down train," he said, rising quickly. "I haven't time to go to the house. I will leave word with the office boy for the women."

Opening a door he called:

"Edward—Edward Caro."

A youth suddenly appeared before the speaker and smilingly asked what was wanted.

"I'm going to Marquette on the train; am called on unexpected business; just tell Grace that I'll be back in the morning by first train."

"Yes, sir."

Edward Caro was short and stout-built with crisp red curls, and keen black eyes. He had been about a year in the employ of Ward & Co., and had given the best of satisfaction. Mr. Stratton liked him, as he attended strictly to business and asked no questions. His age could not have been far from twenty. Without more words Mr. Stratton turned away.

He drew on a light overcoat, as the evenings were chilly in that northern latitude, and hurried from the place.

He had but one minute to spare when he reached the depot. Purchasing a ticket, he boarded the train, and was soon thundering on toward Marquette.

He was met at the depot in Marquette by Tom Tunnel, who still wore the guise we have seen him in on the vessel Lake Queen.

"I sent the telegram, Mr. Stratton," explained the detective, as he introduced himself as Sam Jackson.

"I thought you would be glad to know the body of your late partner had been found."

"Certainly, certainly," answered Mr. Stratton, "where is it?"

"This way."

The mine-owner followed the detective to the wharf, where, under a shed, lay the body, which was still guarded by the two fishermen, and surrounded by a crowd of idle, curious people of the docks.

A lantern but dimly illumined the scene, as Charles Stratton pushed his way through the throng, and bent over the dripping, bloated body.

"Hold the lantern this way."

One of the fishermen did so, revealing a ghastly sight. Charles Stratton was strangely cool under it all, and he at once became the object of the detective's deepest scrutiny.

Without a shudder, or seeming aversion, Ward's late partner pulled back the blanket and feasted his eyes on the loathsome corpse.

"He is a man without feeling," at once decided Tunnel.

Stratton did not rise to his feet until he had made a thorough examination of the dead—the clothing, teeth, etc. Evidently he was determined to be satisfied before committing himself.

At length he rose to his feet.

"Well?" and Tom laid his hand on the millionaire's shoulder.

"It is Harry Ward," he announced.

"You are sure of it—sure there can be no mistake?"

"I am."

"It will be necessary to summon the coroner, I suppose."

"I suppose so."

Tunnel and the partner walked away together. The coroner was shortly after summoned, and a jury impaneled to sit upon the case.

The verdict rendered was accidental drowning, which the detective did not attempt to change. He could not prove the facts in the case, and the verdict of the coroner's jury might tend to quiet the fears of the assassin.

"You seem to have interested yourself in this affair, Mr. Jackson," observed Stratton, as the two walked back toward the hotel, late at night. "Did you know Mr. Ward?"

"Not intimately. I met him once in Detroit, and of course we met on the boat."

"Exactly. Are you willing to see all necessary arrangements made for the shipping the body to Ishpeming? I am quite nervous over this terrible affair, and Miss Ward will be terribly shocked. Of course it will be utterly out of the question for her to see the remains."

"It would not be best," admitted the detective. "I suppose she does not know that her parent is supposed to have been murdered?"

"What?"

The millionaire stopped short, and laid his hand on the shoulder of his companion.

Tom Tunnel had been thus abrupt for a purpose, and he was sorry, now, that the shadows of night hid his companion's face from his gaze. He fancied it was white, and written with a deep dread.

"I say it is not likely that Laura Ward knows of the fact that her parent was murdered," said Tunnel, with considerable emphasis.

"Good heavens, sir! I don't quite understand you," articulated Charles Stratton. "The verdict to-night was accidental drowning."

"But you do not believe that the truth, sir?" uttered Tom Tunnel sternly.

"I certainly do."

The ring in the man's voice was honest enough, and Detective Tunnel had no reason to doubt him.

"Your suspecting something wrong brings to mind the fact that immediately after the arrival of the Lake Queen, a young fellow, a passenger on the boat, remarked the same thing you have to-night, and in my presence. I could not believe it then, and do not now. No one would be the gainer by Mr. Ward's death, and he had not an enemy in the wide world that I am aware of."

"Not one? Bethink yourself, Mr. Stratton."

"I know I have spoken truly. Are you a detective?" he asked sharply.

"I may be!"

The mine-owner withdrew his hand from the other's shoulder, and the detective could feel that he was deeply troubled.

"My soul!" he muttered, "this is terrible!"

Why was the man so deeply affected?

Tom Tunnel asked himself this question, when he remembered the cool demeanor of the partner while examining the corpse of his late associate. Was there a deep meaning to be attached to this? Could it be that Charles Stratton was glad to have his partner out of the world?

As a detective Tom Tunnel was given to looking in unexpected places for criminals. He really had no suspicion of the millionaire miner, yet, from long experience in the calling of man-hunter, Tom Tunnel had learned to be surprised at nothing, and to look in unexpected places for criminals; therefore, he could not ignore the fact that Charles Stratton was an important factor in the case he was working up.

Other factors were destined to come in soon, and the great detective was likely to have his hands full ere done with the case that had come so unexpectedly into his hands. He realized that a small fortune awaited him should he succeed in bringing the assassin of the rich mine-owner to justice, and this, perhaps, was not the least incentive to urge Tom Tunnel to sift the affair to the bottom.

It seemed that no suspicion of murder would have been elicited had not Tom Tunnel been a passenger on board the Lake Queen, which fact helped to confirm the detective in the opinion he had long since formed, that many cases of supposed suicide and accidental death were really homicides.

Tom Tunnel soon after parted with

Mr. Stratton, promising to meet him again in the morning.

The detective was sauntering along in the shadow of a huge building, not far from the dock, when his quick ear caught a sound, the stealthy tread of a foot.

Quickly Tom turned.

His movement was none too soon. A dark object shot forward and whizzed within an inch of the detective's head. The next moment a man dashed from the shadow of the hall, and disappeared in the deeper darkness of the night beyond the dock.

At first Tom started to pursue, but after going a few yards, he halted and turned back, deeming it best not to press the chase into unknown dangers.

Going back, he searched for the missile that had been hurled with savage ferocity at his head.

He soon found it, and held it up for inspection. It proved to be a most dangerous weapon indeed—a carpenter's hand-ax, whose keen edge would have penetrated his brain had the detective not turned just as he did.

Evidently the man-hunter was hunted in turn.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CRIMINATING GOLD HARPOON.

The body of the unfortunate millionaire miner was placed in an elegant coffin, sealed up, and sent to Ishpeming, where a grand funeral was held, and the remains conveyed, with all possible solemnity to their last resting place in one of the city cemeteries.

The coffin was not opened, and the relatives and friends were not shocked at the repulsive sight presented by the corpse.

We will not linger over the sorrowful occasion.

Laura was prostrated utterly, and kept her bed for many days. When at length she did come forth into the sunlight, she was pale and haggard with the awful bereavement that weighed down her young life. As yet no word came to her regarding the theory of murder. Her parent's drowning was purely accidental, and she was not disturbed by friends in this belief, it was better than for her to know the truth. William Armor was in the city. He had remained here since his landing. He had not met Laura to speak with her since the night she left the Ishpeming depot in the family carriage.

He was anxious to meet her, but under the present state of affairs it was impossible for him to gain an audience. William roomed at a second-class boarding house, and spent the greater part of his time sauntering about the city.

Some time after the funeral, Will was accosted on the street by a queer-looking old man, with red gray hair, and enormous beard of the same hue. His eyes were covered by a pair of blue glasses, and he walked with apparent caution, as though feeling his way.

Evidently the man's sight was defective.

"I want to see you alone fur a little while, young feller."

"You see me, don't you?" retorted William, rather ungraciously, perhaps, for the man's stare annoyed him.

"But we're not alone here."

"What's the difference?"

"A good deal."

"I don't wish to return to my room just now," said Will, a trifle impatiently. "I will see you at another time. I'm not a mine-owner, so it won't pay you to waste your time on me."

The young man was about to walk away, when the stranger touched his arm.

"See here, young feller, this is important."

"No?"

"It is. I've some news for you, William Armor."

"You know my name, it seems," uttered Will, in surprise.

"And your nature, too, my boy. I wish to tell you something—"

Here the man paused, and gazed furtively about, as if fearful of listening ears.

"Well?"

"About the murder of Harry Ward!"

"Ha! Come this way, quick!" and Will started off at a rapid walk, not pausing or looking once behind him until he reached his boarding house.

The old man was close at his heels.

Soon the two were in the privacy of young Armor's room, with the door closed and securely locked.

Then Armor turned on his companion.

"Now, old man, I will listen!"

The old man sank into a chair and looked reflectively at Will. He was provokingly slow in his movements the young man thought.

"Don't you know me, William?"

"Know you? How should I? I never met you until this hour!"

A low laugh greeted him.

The next instant the seeming old man removed a couple of wigs, beard and hair, revealing a smooth intelligent face and a pair of the sharpest gray eyes William Armor had ever looked into.

"I've met you somewhere before," cried the astonished Will.

"Yes, on the Lake Queen."

"You are the detective Sam Jackson?"

"Yes; but more generally known as Tom Tunnel. Perhaps you have heard of me?"

"I have," admitted William.

He held out his hand, and the detective pressed it warmly.

"Now to business, Will," said Tom Tunnel. "You, of course, know what lay I am on?"

"The Ward affair?"

"Yes."

"Are you still of the opinion that the millionaire was murdered?"

"I am."

"Have you made any new discoveries?"

"Yes."

Tom Tunnel thrust his hand into his bosom. When it came forth he thrust it toward the young man.

"Look at that, Will."

Armor took from the detective's hand a small, glittering object.

It proved to be a gold scarf-pin, shaped like a harpoon.

"Where did you get this?" questioned Will, after examining the trinket carefully.

"Did you ever see it before?"

The detective answered the young man's question by asking another.

"Yes," answered Will.

"Where?"

"Exactly where it is now—in my hand. The pin is mine."

"Ha! is that so?"

"It is. Perhaps you will now tell me where you found it?"

For a moment the detective hesitated. He looked furtively at Will from the corners of his eyes, and seemed to be making a mental calculation. At length he said:

"Perhaps you can tell me where and when you lost the pin."

"Easily done," answered Will. "I lost the pin on board the Lake Queen."

"Ah!"

"The first day out from Detroit."

"Go on."

"That is all. Now, where did you find it?"

"Wait a moment. You say you lost the gold harpoon while on board the Lake Queen. Are you sure it was not lost on the night that Harry Ward fell overboard, which of course would be at a later date than the one you mention?"

The gray eyes of Tunnel were fixed in a keen gaze on the face of his young companion while he talked. Were his first suspicions again uppermost? and did he believe that Will Armor was the assassin? Perhaps so. The detective was determined to follow every clue that came under his notice.

A slight pallor shot into the cheeks of young Armor. He felt uneasy under the detective's scrutiny, and seemed not a little nervous. Of course all this did not escape the notice of wary Tom Tunnel.

"I have told you the truth, Mr. Tunnel; I lost this pin on the first day out, and have never looked upon it since until this hour. I am thankful to you for finding it, for I valued it highly as a keepsake from a friend, and never expected to see it again."

"Did you search for it?"

"Yes."

"How do you account for its loss?"

"I imagined it was stolen."

"You imagined so?"

"Yes," uttered Will, with a start at the vehement emphasis of the detective. "Of course I could not say for a certainty."

"No," gravely. "It is a very important question, Will—one that concerns the future welfare of more than one person."

"I am sorry I cannot help you out, Mr. Tunnel."

Again the eyes of the detective were fixed closely on the young man's face. There were some things about the whole affair that as yet puzzled even the astute man-hunter.

"I am sorry, too," assented Tunnel. "You would ask why?"

"Yes."

"Because the man who wore that scarf-pin on the night of the 13th of May last was the man who murdered Harry Ward."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAN WITH THE EYE-PATCH.

William trembled, and his face became colorless.

The eyes of the detective were piercing him to the quick. He tried to avoid their gaze, but could not, and for some moments an agony of silence fell over the two occupants of the little room.

"Guilty!"

To an ordinary man this would have been the verdict pronounced against William Armor, and the astute detective more than half believed this was so.

He thought of the piercing, snake-like eyes, however, and of the attempt on his life that night, near the Marquette docks, and realized that if Will was really guilty, he had an accomplice who was anxious to put the man-hunter off the track forever.

"Again I repeat," said the detective, "that the man who wore this pin on that fatal May night was the murderer of Harry Ward. This pin was torn from the breast of the assassin in the struggle that ended in Ward's being flung into the water. It is a plain case."

Will had regained his self-possession suddenly.

"I see how it is," he said, with a grim smile, not forced to his face by a pleasurable feeling. "You put this and that together, and find that the finger of circumstances points to me as the assassin."

"I will not deny it, William Armor. Circumstantial evidence is strong, indeed, against you."

"And yet you doubt?"

A pair of honest eyes looked squarely into the face of Tom Tunnel.

"And yet I doubt. I admit that," he said, slowly.

"As well you may," asserted Will Armor. "I am entirely innocent of even the thought of such a crime. I think I shall insist on an arrest and examination. I want this suspicion cleared up, and my name vindicated."

"I am glad to hear you say it, William," answered the detective. "I confess that I like you, my boy, and I should hate to see you go out of the world at the end of a rope."

"And I should dislike very much playing such a part," returned Will, grimly.

"Let us hope that you will not. It was the man who stole this pin, that

committed the murder. Can you let no light upon this dark subject?"

"None," uttered Will, hopelessly.

The detective looked grave, as well he might. At length he said:

"Are you sure there is no mistake regarding the ownership of the pin?"

"Quite sure. Look."

Will advanced and held the gold harpoon down for the detective's inspection.

"Right there are the letters W. A., scratched with the point of a knife. I made those letters myself, and am willing to swear to them in any court in Christendom. Do you doubt now?"

"No. I honor you for your straightforward actions. Although matters look dark for you just now, I am inclined to believe you are innocent."

"Thank you," said Will. "I am as deeply anxious as you can be to have the murderer punished, and will do all I can to hunt him down."

"I believe you," said Tom Tunnel. "Allow me to retain that pin, if you please. I may need it before long."

"Certainly."

Will handed over the gold harpoon, and the man-hunter secreted it on his person. Then he rose as if to depart.

"Where will you go now?" questioned Will.

"Directly to the home of the millionaire. I propose to find out something regarding the family affairs of the Wards."

"Perhaps it would be well enough."

Tom resumed his disguise, and was then ready to depart.

"Remember one thing," admonished the man-hunter; "do not whisper about my presence. It is just as well that I am not generally known to be in the copper regions, for the present."

"I will remember, but whenever you may feel unsafe, that I have been deceiving you, I am ready to be placed under arrest."

A smile came to the face of Tom Tunnel.

"Don't worry, young man. When I feel confident that you are the man I want, you won't be long in hearing from me."

"I am ready to vindicate myself at any time."

"Well, have a little patience, William. The time of your arrest may come sooner than you imagine. Were I so disposed, I might have you arrested for murder, and, I believe, convicted."

"You could not convict me, for I am not guilty," persisted Armor, confidently.

"That does not follow," averred Tunnel. "I think it is sometimes easy enough to fix a crime upon an innocent man, and one whom circumstances have not combined so strongly against as they have against you. One word more, and then I go. Whatever may happen, young man, remember that it is easier to keep out of prison than to get out when once in," and with these words the detective passed from the room. Will's brain was in a whirl, as he peered from the window, and watched the disguised detective pass down the street.

Tom Tunnel had gone less than half the distance to the mansion of the Wards when he came to a sudden halt.

A man's hand had fallen upon his collar, and turned him sharply about.

"Say, mister, can you tell me whar I'll find Mr. Ward?"

The man who asked this question, in a gruff, rather impudent tone, was far from being a prepossessing individual, and the detective, then and there, acquired a strong dislike for the fellow that time alone could soften.

A rather tall, stooping form, one shoulder considerably higher than the other, and a head covered by a mop of black bristles, that were in strange contrast to the sandy tangle that covered the lower part of his face.

One eye was covered by a round, black patch, that was held in place by strings passing behind the head and secured.

An ill-fitting, greasy suit of clothes two sizes too small was drawn upon the ungainly form and a greasy white wool hat was drawn low over the sound eye, which gleamed like the celebrated optic of Argus of old.

"Great Caesar, man! what do you want?" demanded the man-hunter, sharply, as he eyed this individual sternly.

"Where'll I find Mr. Ward, I axed 'ye."

"Which Ward?"

"Didn't know thar was more'n one."

"Nor I."

"Then he's the one I mean. Mr. Harry Ward, the rich miner."

"Say, mister, you're a stranger here, I take it," said Tom Tunnel, rather bluntly.

"Some'at, yes," admitted the man. "I'm looking fur a job. I worked fur old Ward—ole Henry we called him then—a good many years ago, down in the Saginaw pineries. He wasn't so rich in them days—oh, no; but he was a real good boss all the same."

"Well, you won't work for him no more," growled the detective, remembering the role he had to act.

"Why not?"

"He's dead and buried these many days; that's why."

"Dead! Old Harry Ward dead! You don't tell me so?" groaned the man, covering his face with his hands and seemingly deeply moved.

"It's true; he was accidentally drowned."

"What'll I do now? I'm dead broke, an' a long ways from home."

"I cannot help you, but you might get a job of Mr. Stratton, who was Ward's partner."

With a groan, however, the man turned away.

"Old Henry dead? It don't seem possible," were the last words the detective heard, as he hurried on his way.

After the two had separated, the stranger stood leaning against a brick wall, glaring about him sharply with his single eye.

"So Harry Ward is dead," he muttered lowly. "Well, I expected it. I will now call on William Armor."

Then the queer-looking individual moved on up the street. He had gone but a little way, however, when he suddenly changed his mind, and turned into a drinking saloon, where were gathered several men, drinking and gambling from different parts of the city.

CHAPTER IX.

LOST THE GAME!

Tunnel had little trouble in making his way to the Ward mansion. He sought an interview with Laura, but failed to obtain it. His disguise was against him, and Laura was not yet able to see any one, not even her friends. Nevertheless, the detective gained entrance to the front parlor, and interviewed the mistress of the house, Grace Stratton.

He found her a not unprepossessing female of perhaps thirty, with mild blue eyes and somewhat nervous manner.

"No, we don't need any one to look after the grounds," announced Grace, in answer to the disguised detective's request for work. "I think you had better see brother if you are in need of employment; perhaps he can give you something to do."

"Many thanks, madam," and Tom Tunnel bowed himself out of the room.

He was rather favorably impressed with Miss Stratton than otherwise, and believed that in her Laura would find a tender and true friend.

The detective hurried away, entered a house by the back way, near the suburbs of the town, and in his private room he doffed his disguise, and, adjusting a gray chin whisker, once more sallied upon the street.

People who knew Tom Tunnel well would scarcely fail to recognize him now, when so slightly disguised.

"I am not progressing very fast," muttered Tom Tunnel. "I haven't met the man with the serpent eyes for a long time. I must find him, for if William Armor is not guilty that other one is."

There stood that "if" staring the detective in the face.

If Will was not guilty some one else was. Of course this was plain enough, but the doubt in the mind of Tom Tunnel still lingered, and Will was not yet solid in the estimation of the lake-shore detective.

Tunnel wandered about town, visiting several gambling hells, without making any new discoveries.

Night darkened down upon the mining city.

Pedestrians were plenty enough, moving to and fro, and Tom Tunnel watched the stream with no little interest.

He was just facing the front of a saloon, where the brilliant light from within flashed over his person, when a low ejaculation arrested his steps:

"There he is, that's him—the sharpest detective in the West!"

"You don't say! Is that little chap the famous Tom Tunnel?"

"He is. I know the cub as far as I can see him."

Such were the words that reached the ear of the detective and caused him to saunter with slow steps past the glaring entrance.

"He looks like an ordinary loafer."

"You want to look out for him just the same."

"What can he be doing here?"

"He's on some lay. I'll catch on to it before long."

Then the voices died out.

In passing, Tom cast a side-long glance at the speakers.

One was a large man, with immense breadth of chest, and wore a wide-brimmed hat, from beneath which flashed a pair of keen, cunning eyes, the very ones the detective had met on board the Lake Queen; the other man was smaller, and Tunnel scarcely noticed him.

But the flash of those eyes gave the detective an electric shock.

"I am on the trail once more. My man with the serpent eyes lingers near! It is well," muttered Tom under his breath.

On and on he walked. Many people passed him, brushing him rudely at times, but these little annoyances were not noticed by the detective.

Suddenly, as several forms jostled against his, he felt a hand touch his own, and the next instant a bit of paper was pressed into his palm.

Tom Tunnel looked at the passers sharply.

Which one had touched his hand? It was impossible to tell.

The detective halted under a lamp and opened the bit of paper, to find a few lines scrawled on the inside.

"Tom Tunnel, you are known. Get out of this city and country at once, or you will find a grave in the lake!"

That was all.

The detective crushed the paper in his hand and glanced sharply about him.

"By Jupiter!" he exclaimed, "do the cutthroats of Ishpeming think they can scare me? They have tackled the wrong man this time."

"It is leave or die!"

A voice hissed the words almost in his ear.

Quickly Tom Tunnel whirled, to find himself looking into a pair of gleaming, serpent eyes—the same eyes that had haunted him continually since the tragedy on the lake!

"Ha! I'll wing you this time, scoundrel," and the detective's revolver came to a level.

Then a sharp flash, followed by a loud report.

A mocking laugh succeeded.

"You poor fool, you are doomed!"

With an oath, Tom Tunnel darted for-

ward and turned the corner sharply, only to find himself in the arms of a policeman.

"Ho, fellow! what's this?" demanded the guardian of the night, sternly.

Tom attempted to shake himself loose, but a ponderous hand clutched his collar, while a club was flourished menacingly over his head.

"Keep quiet, fellow, or I'll club ye!" growled the officer, gruffly. "Wasn't it you that fired the pistol just now?"

"Release me, and I'll tell you all about it," answered the detective, subduing his wrath with a mighty effort.

"Too thin!" sneered the defender of law and order. "You want to cut and run; but you sha'n't. No, I'll take you to the station."

"Let up, I tell you!" cried Tom Tunnel, angrily.

But the policeman knew his duty, and began dragging the detective by main force.

This was too much. Tunnel felt like braining the burly night guardian on the spot. He realized, however, that the best course was to reason with this deity of justice, and he attempted it.

There was no reasoning with the man.

In vain Tom protested, and assured him that he was a detective out on duty; the burly Welshman, who had the liberties and peace of American citizens to look after, refused to entertain any of the explanations advanced by his prisoner.

After a moment's reflection the detective concluded to go with the man to the station, where he believed his explanation would be accepted.

In this belief Tom was not mistaken. To the sergeant in charge he had no trouble in proving his identity; and he was at once set at liberty, while the overzealous Welshman received a deserved reprimand.

As Tunnel walked the streets once more, he could not resist the thought that the man he had fired at was chuckling, even now, over the mishap that had befallen his enemy.

The detective was not in an enviable mood when he entered a gambling-den, half an hour later.

He was searching for the man with the gleaming eyes, who, he felt sure, was a crook who needed looking after, and who, doubtless, was the real murderer of Harry Ward.

"I must get my hands on that man," mused Tom. "I feel in my bones that he can let a flood of light in upon the darkness that surrounds this mysterious case."

Seating himself in a shaded alcove, the detective watched the goers and comers, without himself being an object of attention.

For half an hour he sat thus without moving, and without making any discoveries. He was on the point of rising to look elsewhere, when a stout form stood in the doorway, and glanced sharply about the room.

It was the man with the serpent eyes! Would he come in?

With scarcely a breath, Tunnel waited for the man to enter the room. His nerves were strung to the highest tension now, for he believed he was looking upon the murderer of Harry Ward!

"I will clap the darbies on the fellow if he does cross that threshold," decided Tom, making ready to execute a coup de main.

Of a sudden, the gleaming eyes fixed themselves on the man in the alcove; then the big man lifted his hat, with a mocking bow, and disappeared.

This was tantalizing in the extreme.

Scarcely reflecting on the danger, the detective sprang to his feet and rushed from the saloon.

In the shadows without the detective paused, for to his hearing came a low chuckle.

With revolver cocked, Tom Tunnel pressed forward. A form flitted on in advance.

The detective pursued, but was chagrined to see it disappear suddenly. Soon he stood at the entrance to a narrow, gloomy alley. Into this the villain had doubtless fled.

Recklessly Tom pushed his way into this passageway.

His foot struck against a crouching body.

The next instant a form sprang up; there came a swift stroke, followed by a dull thud, and Tom Tunnel sank to the ground.

The detective was not rendered insensible, but the blow dazed him, and ere he could sufficiently recover to defend himself, his revolver was wrenched from his hand and a knee pressed down upon his chest.

"Tom Tunnel," hissed a voice, "you were warned, but you heeded it not. You have invited your own doom; now die!"

A keen blade gleamed and the fallen detective realized that he had lost the game.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN OF MYSTERY.

The big man who pressed the detective's breast with his knee thought the game was in his own hands; therefore he hesitated, to indulge in self-gratulation over his victory.

"You are completely in my power, Tom Tunnel, and must die, so you may as well answer a few questions I will put to you."

Here was a minute of respite, and the half-stunned detective caught at it quickly.

"Well?" he questioned, eagerly.

"What is your business in the copper region?"

"A private affair of my own."

"Don't lie on the brink of the grave, old man," growled the villain. "I know what lay you are on. You seek to find the one who flung old Ward into the lake on the night of the 13th of May."

"If you know this, why question me?"

"I wish to give you a little advice."

"Well?"

"I don't admit that Mr. Ward met with foul play, but if he did, you have been barking on the wrong trail."

"No?"

"You have. William Armor is the murderer, and he will be arrested and punished for the crime."

"Who are you?"

"Ah, that would be telling. I'm sorry you refused to heed my warning, old fellow, but you wouldn't, and now time's up and you must go."

With cool deliberation the scoundrel raised his deadly knife once more.

Tom Tunnel made a desperate effort to free himself but he found that the big man possessed a giant's strength.

"No, no, my fine fellow, you cannot escape when Mike Jones holds the winning hand."

"Mike Jones!"

The detective's speech was cut short by a set of gripping fingers, and then a ringing filled his ears, while myriad stars seemed to dance before his eyes.

Crash!

Something lit with tremendous force on the head and shoulders of the would-be assassin, and he, too, was borne to the ground with terrible force.

It seemed to the big man as though a huge panther had pounced upon him from the top of the building that loomed high above their heads.

"Guess you wish'd you'd left my pard alone, you skunk!"

It was a man, after all, but one possessing tremendous power.

Over and over the two men rolled, and thus the detective was unexpectedly relieved of his burden, much to his astonishment and joy. With some difficulty he gained his feet.

"Condemn ye!"

An execration followed, then the crash of retreating feet filled the ears of Tom Tunnel.

"Dumnation!" growled a voice, "ther

scamp slipped through my claws like an eel. Be you hurt, mister?"

"No," said Tom Tunnel. "The big scoundrel has gone?"

"Yes."

"Well, it won't be a hard matter to run him to earth now, since he gave himself away. It's wonder I didn't recognize him before, in spite of his long hair and beard. But, then, he has grown stout since I last saw him."

"Who is he?"

"Mike Jones, one of the toughest crooks Chicago can boast of. He's been off his old stamping-ground for a year, and I did not know of his whereabouts. It seems he is plying his trade in the copper region, and with good success, I judge."

The detective looked about for his revolver, and soon found it; also the long knife with which the Chicago crook threatened his life.

Then the two men walked out to the street.

Under the light of a street-lamp Tom Tunnel examined the man who had come so unexpectedly and opportunely to his rescue. What was his surprise to recognize the queer customer he had met that day inquiring after Mr. Ward, the murdered millionaire.

He had an idiotic grin on his face when the detective looked at him. It seemed hardly possible that the old fellow, with the one eye, was capable of exhibiting any sense.

Nevertheless he had saved the detective's life.

Tom held out his hand.

"You did me a mighty good turn just now, old man."

"I reckon so."

"I owe my continued existence to you."

"Precisely."

"What reward do you seek?"

"None."

"You have my everlasting gratitude. My name is Sam Jackson; what is yours?"

"Hiram Stiles."

"Well, Mr. Stiles, I am very glad to make your acquaintance," asserted the detective as he shook the man's hand warmly. "I didn't know you possessed such grit; the man you conquered was one of the hardest nuts in the Northwest, a jail-bird and a crook of the worst sort."

"Do tell. He was the stoutest cur I ever hitched on to, and I'm pretty stout when I let my muscle out," answered Stiles, with a grin and peculiar twist of his body that was comical in the extreme.

"You look like a stout fellow."

"I am. Say, mister, hadn't you jest as lief tell a feller your real name?"

"What do you mean?"

"You said your name's Jackson."

"Yes."

"But it ain't."

"What are you talking about? If I wasn't under obligations to you, I should get mad," said the detective shortly.

"Don't mind the obligations," answered Stiles, "I know your name ain't Jackson, anyhow."

"What's my name, then?"

"Down in Chicago you're known as Tom Tunnel, the detective."

Tunnel gazed at the man in blank astonishment.

Of a sudden he grasped the fellow's arm, and demanded:

"Who are you, and how came you to know my name? I am sure Stiles is not your real name."

"Mebbe not. Wot's the odds?" chuckled the man.

"A good deal," answered Tunnel. "Are you a detective?"

For a moment the man calling himself Hiram Stiles hesitated.

"Speak!" commanded Tom Tunnel.

"No."

The monosyllable came distinctly from the bearded lips of the one-eyed stranger.

"You are in disguise, at least?"

"No."

"I do not believe you."

Tom Tunnel was losing his coolness, and spoke a trifle bluntly.

The stranger smiled.

"You kin do as you like, pard. No, don't you tech that."

The last remark was called out by a move on the part of Tom Tunnel as though he would seize the beard that adorned the face of Stiles. At the same time the latter displayed a gleaming revolver.

"I know my rights, Mr. Tunnel, and you interfere at your peril!"

There was a change in the man's voice, and now the detective was satisfied that the fellow was not what he seemed. Was he, too, a detective? or was he in league with the evil spirits of the copper and iron city? As he was under the deepest obligations to the man, Tom Tunnel did not feel like pushing investigation too far.

"Beg your pardon, sir," uttered the detective, the moment he saw that he had gone too far, and angered his unknown friend. "I am sorry for my suspicions. You seemed to know me, and I thought it was no more than fair that I should know you as you are."

To this the man made no reply.

Without a word he shamled away, leaving the puzzled detective standing alone.

CHAPTER XI.

ROGUES IN CONFERENCE.

Some evenings later.

In the back room of a low groggery sat four men at a game of cards. A dim light burned in the room, and the faces of the players were not plainly revealed.

The fumes of tobacco and beer were strong in the place—strong enough to turn a weak stomach; but the men at the table had brass-lined stomachs that revolted at nothing.

One of the four men was really a handsome fellow, broad-shouldered and massive, with large head and wide, fan-like black beard covering his breast. At his left hand sat a mug of beer, half drained.

The big man was playing the last card in the game as we look in upon the party.

With a low laugh he flattened the card upon the greasy table, and with his other hand swept in the stakes.

"You cheated!"

This utterance was met by an argument not to be overcome—a six-shooter in the hand of the burly winner.

"Oh, no, I guess not," he chuckled, and then he leaned back and laughed in a deep, guttural way that certainly was not pleasing to his companions. "Mike Jones knows what he's about. Ha, ha, ha!"

With low mutterings the three men rose from their chairs and passed out to the bar.

Jones remained behind for a few minutes, and proceeded to count his gains.

"Pretty good night's work," he chuckled. "If that infernal detective was off the track I would feel easier. It's time we made a master-stroke and disarmed the cuss, if we don't put him under entirely."

Thus musing, the gambler was about to leave the room, when a ragged youth entered and said:

"Mr. Jones?"

"Aye, lad."

The boy handed the man a sealed note and then glided away.

A smile swept the face of the gambler as he opened the folded paper, and held the written page to the light of the smoky lamp.

"I want to see you at once. Come to the shanty on V street. JIM."

"Exactly," muttered the man. "Something new in the wind, I reckon. Well, I'll go at once. Jim may have some news to communicate."

Drawing his hat low, the man left the room by a narrow back door, and was soon on the street.

It was half a mile to the shanty on V

street, and Jones kept one hand on the butt of a pistol as he glanced sharply about on every side. He had a wholesome fear of the detective who was on the trail of Ward's assassin, and would have put an end to his existence some nights before but for the sudden interference of the powerful tramp, Hiram Stiles.

In the course of ten minutes the gambler came to a halt in front of a dingy, weather-beaten house of one story that stood not far from the railroad track.

No light peered forth into the black night, but this was no disappointment to the man, who walked boldly up to the front door and rapped.

This had to be repeated four times ere any signs of life were exhibited, and then the door was opened without a word, and Jones passed unhesitatingly inside.

A candle was lit soon after the gambler entered, and he found himself confronted alone by one person—a man in mask.

A rather undersized individual, the lower portion of whose face was covered by a yellow beard, a black domino over the upper portion.

"Big again," said the gambler, as he confronted the man in mask.

"Yes. You were not followed here?"

"Certainly not."

"We cannot be too cautious."

"True enough."

"I have made discoveries since I saw you last, Mike."

"Well?"

"Tom Tunnel is in Ishpeming."

"I know it."

"You do?" in evident astonishment.

"Yes. I've had an interview with the detective, quite a sharp one," and the gambler laughed in a low tone, not a pleased, but a grim, disagreeable laugh, not pleasant to the ear.

"You astonish me," uttered Jim.

"Why is the detective in Ishpeming?"

"On a sure lay, he thinks."

"Well?"

"He has the impudence to imagine that old Harry Ward was foully dealt with." Again the disagreeable laugh fell from the stout man's lips.

The man in mask started and trembled visibly; then he stroked his beard with a nervous twitching of the fingers that did not escape the notice of the stout gambler, and a contemptuous look filled his gleaming eyes thereat.

"I feared this," finally articulated the masked man. "Tom Tunnel has the name of being one of the keenest detectives west of the lakes. It will be a hard matter to outwit him, I'm thinking."

"Yet it can be done."

The gambler drew a stool from the wall and sat down. He seemed cool and collected. Producing a cigar, he lit it and began smoking.

The man in mask continued to stand.

"Sit down, Jim."

There was a command in the voice of the giant gambler, but it failed of the effect intended.

"No; I will stand."

"But what's the use? May's well take the thing cool. We've got the night before us."

"Mike Jones, you must be mad," cried the mask, with sudden vehemence. "Don't you realize that we are treading on a volcano?"

"Perfectly, sir; perfectly," answered the ruffian, with long, deep puffs at his cigar.

"How then can you be so cool over it?"

"Easy enough. I can slip out of this little affair at any time I choose."

"How?"

"Where there's a will there's a way."

"And you're just villain enough to do it. I was told that I could trust you, Mike Jones, but I find that I have been basely deceived, and we may as well understand each other first as last."

The speaker displayed a revolver.

"Exactly," answered the gambler, coolly crossing his legs and smiling up into the glittering eyes of the mask. "To begin with, suppose you pull off that

hideous mask; I want to know with whom I am dealing."

"No. It was a part of our bargain that I was to remain incog."

"So it was, but you wish to come to a better understanding, and the only way to do that is for you to reveal your face."

"I cannot do that."

"Very well; have it your own way."

Nevertheless a triumphant smile lurked about the corners of the gambler's mouth, as he continued puffing at the weed.

The masked man toyed nervously with his revolver.

The sight of the weapon did not seem to affect Mike Jones in the least; in fact, he seemed to enjoy the situation hugely.

"I sent for you to know what was best to be done, Mr. Jones. You understand these things better than I do."

"Perhaps."

"Is it best to put the detective out of the way?"

"I've been thinking deeply on the subject," said the gambler, a serious look overspreading his face suddenly.

"What conclusion have you arrived at?"

"That it's best to assist the detective in his work."

"What?"

"I've come to the conclusion that the wisest plan would be to assist Tom Tunnel in securing the assassin of Harry Ward," said the gambler, in a tone of solemn earnestness.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENING.

For some moments the man in mask seemed too astounded to speak. He seemed quite overcome.

The huge gambler watched him with a covert smile; at the same time he puffed heavily at his cigar.

A sharp click fell suddenly and startlingly on the ear of Mike Jones.

"Eh, what now?"

"This," exclaimed the masked man, at the same moment thrusting his gleaming revolver into the face of the gambler. "If you have concluded to act the traitor, you shall die now!"

The cocked weapon of Jim was thrust against the gambler's breast now, while a flaming eye glanced along the barrel.

"Put up your shooter, fool!"

Then Mike Jones burst into a laugh.

Jim took a backward step, but still covered the gambler with his six-shooter.

"This is not a laughing matter, sir," uttered the mask in a low, stern tone.

"No. I meant what I said, however."

"To deliver yourself into the hands of the law?"

"Not much."

"What then?"

"To help Tom Tunnel find the assassin of Mr. Ward, as I said. I can put my finger on the man."

"No doubt."

"But he is not the one you imagine."

"Indeed?"

"William Armor is the guilty man."

"No?"

"It is a fact."

"That is, you think the crime might be fixed on him?"

"Yes, and also, I mean to assert that the young fellow is really guilty. I can bring witnesses that Will Armor committed the murder."

"You surprise me."

There was still a sarcastic ring in the voice of Jim, which did not escape the notice of Jones.

"You doubt my sincerity, I see," uttered the gambler, in a half angry voice. "Of course you can do as you see fit. To-night I wash my hands of the whole affair, and skip the town, and you can hoe your own row."

"You will do nothing of the kind," answered Jim, in a milder tone. "I am willing to trust you if you mean business, and are faithful to me. You know there is money in it."

"I have been so assured, but I have a good name at stake, and since you doubt me I'll have nothing to do with the case further."

"You are anxious to leave. Has the detective frightened you? I was informed that Mike Jones was a man of mettle."

A sneering laugh fell from the gambler's lips.

"You knew better than to utter that speech, Jim; but I forgive you this time. I am more than a match for Tom Tunnel, and of course do not fear him. He is a sharp fellow, though, and is determined on ferreting out the murderer. But for him the story of accidental drowning would have been accepted."

"Indeed?"

"It's a fact."

"How came he to suspect anything wrong?"

"He came up on the Lake Queen on another lay and struck this new racket. He is like a sleuth-hound, and means to be in at the death."

"Then the only way out of the scrape is to put this detective out of the world."

With the utmost coolness the man in mask uttered the words.

"No, not the only way."

"Go on."

"Tom Tunnel more than half suspects William Armor of being the man he wants. He is puzzled, at any rate, and if William is arrested and thrown into prison, even the detective will find it up-hill work to go on with the game. There is no doubt that William committed the murder—not the least doubt in the world."

"Mike Jones, you do not mean this in dead earnest?"

"I do. You know Will was sweet on the young lady, Miss Ward, and the girl's father frowned on the youngster. How easy, then, for Will to watch his opportunity and fling the old man into the lake. It would be a supposed case of accidental drowning, and then the coast would be clear for Will to win Laura and a fortune at the same time."

"Yes, it would seem to be, as you say," admitted the mask, "but of course it was not in reality that way."

"It was."

"And he is really and truly the guilty man?"

"I swear that such is the fact."

"Thank Heaven for that!" fervently ejaculated Jim. "The clouds begin to drift away, and I am getting upon solid ground once more."

"In reality you have never been off of it," said Jones. "We are both solid, and if we move quickly enough shall be able to completely outwit this sneaking detective."

"What would you advise?"

"The immediate arrest of William Armor."

After a moment's reflection the mask said:

"This action would please me better than anything that could be done, providing this murder suspicion must be made public."

"It is already public," asserted Jones.

"And, although suspecting Will, the detective is looking in another quarter also. Is that about the outlook?"

"It is."

"Then we must move at once in the matter."

"At once."

The man in mask sat down now for the first time, and laid his hand on the gambler's knee.

"I trust you to engineer this affair, Mr. Jones. You may depend on me to furnish the money, and all necessary expenses, only I must not be known in the affair."

"Very well," said the gambler. "I am in need of money just now."

"How much is necessary for the present?"

"A thousand."

The mask rose, drew forth a wallet, and counted out the amount, which he handed to the gambler.

"I'll see that William Armor is in the hands of the law before many hours," said the gambler, "and furnish evidence that will convict him of murder. I think this will disarm Tom Tunnel."

If it does not, then more severe measures must be resorted to."

Buttoning his coat, Jim moved to the door.

"I think we understand each other now, Mr. Jones?"

"Perfectly."

"Good-night."

The door opened and closed, and the gambler stood alone in the little shanty.

"Who the devil is that man?"

This was the question uttered sharply to the empty walls, by the gambler, the moment the door closed on the form of Jim, the man in mask.

Of course the walls, of the deserted shanty had no power to answer, and the gambler was left to conjecture who his employer might be.

It is safe that his conjectures shot wide of the mark.

The money so unhesitatingly paid over by Jim was evidence of the man's earnestness of purpose, and that it would pay the gambler to cling to his victim as long as possible.

The gambler extinguished the light soon after the departure of his employer, and himself passed out into the night.

In the meantime the man in mask was striding down one of the dimly lighted back streets of the mining city, hurrying with nervous tread to his home.

He did not notice the dark form flitting like a spirit in his footsteps, nor hear the footfall of the one who was shadowing him closely.

On and on moved Jim, all unconscious of the fact that he was shadowed.

Who was the man who dogged the steps of the night wanderer so closely?

We shall soon see.

Jim stood at a crossing, where the light from the upper window of a house touched his masked countenance.

He seemed to hesitate here, a hesitation that was almost fatal to the prospects of the conspiring villain.

A hand fell on his shoulder, and he turned about with a start of alarm.

A single eye blazed in the face of the mask—the eye of Fate!

"Ha! Who are you?"

Quickly Jim laid a hand on the butt of his revolver, but he was not permitted to draw it.

A strong hand seized his wrist, and the next instant the black mask was torn from his face.

A cry of alarm fell from the lips of Jim.

"Ha!" cried a deep, yet low voice. "So it is you who parade the streets of Ishpeming in this guise? I am glad to know this."

That single eye flamed with an ominous fire into the unmasked face of the night-wanderer, then, of a sudden, hand and mask were flung aside, and the man rushed away in the darkness.

"Ah, heaven! what has happened?"

With a groan of terror, an awful fear clutching at his heart, the unmasked villain reeled from the spot. Who was the man who informed himself in this unceremonious manner of the identity of Jim, the masked night-prowler?

Hiram Stiles!

Was he, too, on the trail of the murder mystery?

If so, he had made a most important discovery, one that startled him not a little, for he recognized in the masked villain one whom he little expected to see on the streets in disguise at that hour of the night. The mystery was deepening.

CHAPTER XIII.

WILL ARMOR'S DASH FOR LIBERTY.

One evening just at dusk, as William Armor sat in his room meditating over the situation, and wondering if it was not time for him to venture to call on Laura, a carriage drew up in front of the house and a man alighted.

"Does Mr. Armor stop here?"

The old man put this question to the proprietor himself, who sat on the porch smoking.

"What say?"

The old man who kept the house was

partially deaf. He removed his pipe, and making a trumpet of his hands, bent forward to listen.

The man repeated his question.

"Oh, yes—yes. You want to see him?"

"Yes, I wish to see him."

"Then I'll call him."

"No; just show me to his room."

"How?"

"Just show me to his room."

"Certainly, certainly."

The man turned toward the carriage and uttered a word, when a companion sprang out, and the three men entered the house, and were soon on the stairs going up toward Will's room.

"What is in the wind now?" muttered the young man, who had heard every word uttered below. "I believe those fellows mean mischief, but I'll not be caught napping. I shall not suffer them to arrest me, if that's what they are after."

Will Armor opened his door, when a rap came thereon, and met the landlord face to face.

"Couple o' gents to see ye, Mr. Armor," announced the landlord.

Then he stepped aside, and the two men entered.

"Good-evening, gents," from Will.

"Good-evening, Mr. Armor!"

"Ah! is that you, Gallagher?" cried the young man, as he recognized the man's voice.

Gallagher was a constable, and Will had met him a few times at Petoskey. They were passing friends.

"It's me, Will," admitted the constable.

"Wait a moment. Let's have a light on the subject."

The young man soon lighted a lamp; then he turned to the constable and his man.

"Sit down, gentlemen."

"We haven't the time just now."

"I am sorry. What is your business with me, Gallagher?"

"It is business of a grave nature," answered the man, evincing no little nervousness. "I am here for the purpose of arresting you."

"Arresting me? Nonsense."

"It's true, Will. I hope you'll submit without trouble. I've no doubt you can prove your innocence, but—but—"

"Of what am I accused?"

"Of the murder of Mr. Ward."

Will was not surprised. The detective had warned him to look out for it. He realized that to go to prison would be to place himself in the power of his enemies completely, a fact that nerved him to resist arrest, perhaps unwisely.

"Murder of Mr. Ward?" exclaimed Will, starting back and evincing great surprise. "Who says he was murdered?"

"That's not for me to discuss," answered Gallagher.

"But I don't believe the story."

"I can't help that."

The constable exhibited a pair of handcuffs.

"What would you do with them?"

Will demanded sharply.

"What would you do with them?" cried Gallagher, in apparent astonishment.

"I will not wear those bracelets. I am a free man, guilty of no crime. I will not go to prison. I feel that a conspiracy has been formed to ruin me, while the real murderer escapes. No, sir; you must not lay a hand on me, Gallagher, not a hand; if you do, you will rue it."

Will towered up, a young athlete, before the officer, his bosom swelling, his eyes flashing fire. He was in deadly earnest.

For the moment Gallagher recoiled.

"Dod blast it!" ejaculated the stout man, who accompanied the constable; "don't let the feller scare ye. Put the cuffs on and let's be going."

Gallagher advanced toward Will.

"Back!" thundered the youth.

And the doughty constable recoiled, as well he might, for he found himself looking into the muzzle of a revolver, a keen eye glancing along the barrel.

"No, sir! I will not permit you to ar-

rest me," argued Will. "I am innocent, and will not go to prison. I wish to be free to hunt down the real assassin. Pocket your bracelets and go home, Gallagher."

"Young man, this is a serious affair," growled the constable, as soon as he recovered from his astonishment, for he had expected to find Will docile as a lamb.

"I am aware of that, yet you can make it more serious."

"How?"

"By persisting in your attempt to deprive me of my liberty."

Again Gallagher recoiled.

He did not bear the name of a coward, however, and it was not in his nature to be driven off in this style. He had come to take Will to prison, and he inwardly swore that he would not go without him.

"Young man, are you aware of the enormity of the crime you would perpetrate, when you resist an officer?"

"I am innocent, and will not be led to doom," grated Will. "I know it is wrong to resist an officer, so if you would save me from doing so, you will depart at once, and not molest me further."

There was no use arguing the point.

Gallagher's companion realized this, and he had been watching an opportunity to secure the youth.

Just as the last word fell from the lips of Will Armor, the short man darted forward like an arrow, and attempted to grasp the youth about the waist.

He had miscalculated the distance and Will's agility, however.

With the quickness of lightning Armor sprang aside, and as the man passed him he dealt the fellow a blow on the head with the butt of his revolver that laid him senseless on the floor.

On the instant, Gallagher had a pistol drawn and presented at the breast of the man he would arrest.

"Now, surrender, or I fire!" exclaimed the constable.

Will was aware that activity was the one thing needful at the present moment, and he acted upon that knowledge.

As the cold steel touched his breast Will brushed it aside with one sweep of his hand; then, with his right digits tightly clenched, he struck from the shoulder, hitting Gallagher squarely on the forehead.

The force of the blow sent the constable reeling against the wall.

This move gave Will a pathway to the door, and he bounded quickly in that direction.

"Halt!"

But Will paid no heed to the summons.

Spang! spang!

Two sharp reports rang out. The fleeing man heard the bullets strike the wall, but none came very near to the fugitive's head.

Will soon gained the stairs.

A motley crowd filled the hall below as the youth gained the head of the stairs. The boarders had been called out by the crash of feet and crack of a revolver.

"Clear the way!" cried Will, as he went down the stairs at two bounds.

As he struck the floor below, Gallagher had gained the landing above.

"Stop that man! stop that man!" he shouted, waving his pistol wildly.

But William gained the outer door unmolested.

He turned for a moment, facing the constable at the head of the stairs.

"Good-by, Mr. Gallagher; I'll see you later," shouted Will, tauntingly.

"Stop that man—he's a murderer!"

Again the voice of the constable filled the house, but it was of no avail. The outer door opened and closed, and William Armor disappeared into the darkness of night.

Great commotion prevailed.

Will, however, made good his escape for the present.

Gallagher boldly proclaimed that William Armor was a murderer, and shocked many of the boarders deeply, who had

learned to like the genial young man exceedingly well.

"If you will look after the man upstairs, I will repair at once to the station and set the police on the lookout for the assassin."

This Gallagher said to the landlord, who promised to do as requested, and then the constable departed. At the time of which we write there were watchmen in the town, but not a regularly uniformed police force. Gallagher, however, knew where to go to find one who would set the officers on the trail, and William Armor was soon to find that he had stirred up a hornet's nest indeed.

The man who had been felled by Will's pistol was still insensible when the landlord and several of the boarders went to Will's room.

"By hokey, friends, I believe the feller's done for."

"Killed?"

"It looks like it," uttered the landlord.

"Then William Armor's a murderer, indeed," uttered a solemn-faced man, who had taken little part in the excitement up to this time.

"Yes, he's killed his man for a certainty now."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NIGHT APPOINTMENT.

On the following day while Mr. Stratton was looking over his morning paper he came upon an article with glowing headlines, that may or may not have astonished him.

Charles Stratton was generally cool, and he evinced no excitement when he read as below:

"A Bold Villain. A notorious character, who goes by the name of William Armor, but who is supposed to have a dozen aliases, resisted arrest last night when Officer Gallagher attempted to serve papers at his room, in a low house on W street. A desperate fight ensued; many shots were exchanged, and Armor escaped, after a determined effort on the part of Officers Gallagher and Roche to secure him. In the melee Roche was fatally injured. A large reward has been offered for the escaped outlaw. It is currently reported that our townsman, Mr. Ward, who was supposed to have been accidentally drowned; was really murdered, and detectives who have been looking into the matter, have found evidence that fixes the awful crime on this villain Armor. If the scoundrel is caught, a lynching party will be in order. Great excitement prevails, and our best citizens are thoroughly aroused to the importance of securing the man, who is at least guilty of two murders. Let every citizen be on the lookout for the scoundrel."

There was more in the same vein, but we have given enough to show the animus of the article, which doubtless reflected public sentiment to a certain extent.

Mr. Stratton looked up from his reading and glanced at his sister and Laura.

"Is it something interesting, Charles?" questioned Grace, as she toyed with her spoon over her coffee.

"Rather. I will read it."

He did so.

When he had finished he looked up to note the effect.

Grace looked grave, while Laura's face was deathly pale.

"There is little doubt but the man will be captured," said Mr. Stratton. "I think, however, that the paper is rather severe on the young fellow."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Grace, her blue eyes going over in their glances to Laura. "It cannot be that William Armor is half the bad man that article would make him out to be."

"I am not sure," said Stratton. "He has been keeping evil company of late. He must have been guilty of something terrible, or he would not have resisted the officers, which, in itself, is a very grave offense."

"True enough; and I used to like Will. I am very sorry for him—"

"William is not guilty of wrong," broke in Laura at this moment, in a trembling voice.

The suspicion that her father had met with foul play had been whispered to her before, so that she was not wholly unprepared to see the assertion in print.

"Wait and see, Laura. I hope not; I sincerely hope not," said Mr. Stratton, rising. "I will go down-town and learn what I can of this affair. No doubt the paper has exaggerated, as all papers do. Keep quiet, and don't worry until I get back, Laura."

With this parting injunction the mine-owner left the room.

"Oh, Grace, this is awful!"

"It is terrible," admitted the spinster, in a low voice.

"And—and do you think they will harm Will if they find him?" questioned Laura, falteringly.

"I can't say. I'm sure I hope not," answered Miss Stratton. "I like Will, and don't wish him any harm; that is, unless—"

"Unless what, Grace?" questioned Laura, as Miss Stratton hesitated.

"Unless he is guilty, as the paper says, of hurling Mr. Ward into the lake."

"Not that! not that!" cried the maiden, with a white heat of vehemence. "I know William could not be guilty of that?"

"How?"

Miss Stratton regarded the maiden with cool questioning.

"Because he was with me when papa was lost—"

But Laura could say no more. Her emotions quite overcame her, and rising, she rushed from the room.

The day passed, and Laura kept her room, refusing to see any one.

It was evident that the news of William Armor's troubles had affected the young lady deeply.

When Mr. Stratton came from the street at noon he reported considerable feeling among the people regarding the revelations of the past few hours.

William Armor had few friends in the city after what had happened, and officers were on the lookout for him.

Telegrams were sent to different stations on the railroads, thus putting the whole northern peninsula on the watch for a medium-sized young man, in brown clothing, black eyes and dark hair, with slight mustache, aged about twenty-five.

Through the mails postal cards were sent, even to Wisconsin, and the lower peninsula of Michigan.

William Armor had stirred up a hornet's nest, indeed.

But the young man remembered the words of Tom Tunnel, the great detective, that it is easier to keep out of prison than to get out, once one gets inside stone walls, and William meant to keep out if possible. His actions, however, were not those of an innocent man, and, perhaps he had made a very foolish move in refusing to surrender himself to the claims of justice.

Just before dark an old man called at the door of the Ward mansion, and inquired for Mr. Stratton.

"He is not in," said the servant.

"Can I see Miss Ward?"

"No."

The door was closed in the old man's face.

He walked away without a word, but he seemed not the man to give up what he came for without an effort.

He passed to the rear of the house, and peered up at a chamber window.

A girl's face was framed in the open window, whose eyes were red with recent weeping.

"It's the one I wish to see," muttered the old man.

No one was in sight just then, and the man swung his arm aloft. A small white pellet struck the maiden's cheek and fell within the room.

Then the old man turned quickly and hurried from the spot.

Laura started as the round object fell against her cheek.

A pellet of paper fell to the carpet.

Without looking to see who had thrown the pellet she secured it, and soon had it open—a square bit of letter-paper, which had been rolled tightly about a small pebble.

Laura was astonished to find some penciling on the inner surface of the paper.

In the dim light she read:

"Miss Ward, I wish to see you alone, if possible, to-night. Wish to question you on an important subject. Will wait in the grove on the vacant lot, two blocks south. Hope you'll not disappoint."

"A Detective."

For some moments the young girl sat wonderingly gazing at the hastily scrawled lines.

"A detective?" she mused. "Who can it be? Perhaps it is the man called Tom Tunnel, whom Grace spoke to Mr. Stratton about, not long ago. The great detective is in the city, and I should like to see him very much."

After brief reflection, Laura resolved to meet the writer of the letter.

She felt that there could be no danger in doing so, since she had no enemies who could wish her harm.

Shortly after dark Laura left her room, closely veiled, and passed down the stairs. Mr. Stratton had not yet come in from the office, and Grace was giving orders to Mary in the kitchen, and thus the maiden passed out unobserved.

She had not been gone twenty minutes, however, when Grace, in passing along the hall carrying a lamp, discovered on the floor the very bit of paper which the detective had written to Laura, and where the latter had carelessly dropped it on her exit from the house.

A frown came to the face of Grace when she read the note.

At once she made her way to Laura's room, and was not disappointed to find it vacant.

"She has gone to meet—whom?"

For some moments the spinster stood clutching her lamp, glaring into vacancy.

After a moment she exclaimed:

"Ha! I have it! That note was from Will. I have suspected them of clandestine meetings before. He has taken this way to see her again, to protest his innocence, no doubt, the deceiver!"

A perceptible sneer curled the woman's lips at the last. She hastened down-stairs just as her brother entered.

At once she laid the facts before him.

"Undoubtedly it's Will," Mr. Stratton admitted.

"I'm sure of it," asserted Grace.

"What shall we do?"

"You must do your duty, Charles," cried Grace, with solemn mien; "go to the grove with force enough to capture the daring and impudent desperado, who will, if not interfered with, steal Laura from under our very noses."

"But suppose the man is not Will?"

"There is no such supposition."

"It may be Tom Tunnel."

"Well, no harm will be done in finding out."

"I will go at once," and soon Stratton left the house, heavily armed, proceeding in the direction of the vacant lot.

CHAPTER XV.

DETECTIVE TOM AS INQUISITOR.

Laura was not long in making her way to the vacant lot, which was covered with a growth of small trees, situated only about eighty rods from the residence of the Wards.

It was not a dark night, for a new moon was riding in the heavens, and Laura easily made her way to the centre of the grove.

In a little while she heard a step behind her.

Turning, she stood face to face with a man.

"Miss Ward?"

"Yes."

"I am glad you came. I feared you

would not. I will not detain you long. You are a brave girl, and I believe I can trust you."

"First tell me who you are," said Laura, drawing away from the man instinctively.

"I will be frank with you, Miss Ward. I am Tom Tunnel, the detective, and am seeking to unearth the mystery surrounding the death of your father."

"Well?" with a spasmodic grasp at her throat.

"Perhaps you may be able to throw light upon a dark subject."

"I—I fear not. I know but little about the events of that awful night."

"As much as any one, I'm thinking. Have you heard the news regarding William Armor?"

"Yes; it is awful!"

"Admitted. An attempt was made to arrest him for murder."

"Yes."

"For the murder of Harry Ward."

For some moments not a word fell from the lips of Laura. She could not speak if she would.

"Doubtless you know why I have sent for you, Miss Ward?"

"N-no, I haven't the slightest idea."

"To let a little light upon a dark subject. You have heard of me, Miss Ward?"

"I have heard of Tom Tunnel," she answered.

"Then you know that you can trust me?"

"I feel so—yes."

"That is not a little gained," uttered the man, with a satisfied smile. "Now, then, will you answer the questions I shall put to you?"

"I will try."

"I could ask no more than that."

"Proceed."

"First, then, I wish to make sure how William Armor stands in this affair. What relation does he bear to you, Laura Ward?"

"That of a friend."

"Nothing more?"

"Certainly not."

"As to the story that he is guilty of homicide, what is your opinion?"

"That he is innocent."

Tom Tunnel, for he it was, was well pleased with her straightforward answers.

"Can you tell me if Will was with your father—"

"Mr. Tunnel!" exclaimed Laura, interrupting the detective with a pained cry, "you must understand how painful this subject is to me, and if you have not a good and sufficient motive I beg of you not to harrow my feelings."

"I have a good and sufficient motive," asserted Tom Tunnel. "If you trust me, you will never regret it. It may be the means of saving William Armor from prison and of bringing an infamous criminal to justice."

After this explanation, Laura was ready and willing to answer all questions.

"Was William Armor with your father just before he fell into the lake?"

"He was not, but with me in the cabin."

"As he told me. Had you any other acquaintance on the boat besides Will?"

"Several."

"Gentlemen?"

"Both ladies and gentlemen."

"Exactly. Was one of them a large man, with heavy beard and piercing eyes?"

"No! none of my friends would bear that description."

"Very well. Now, was it not a fact that William Armor was more than a friend to you—that he expected some day to bear a holy relation to the daughter of the millionaire miner?"

Not an instant did the girl hesitate in reply.

"You wish to pry deeply into my affairs, I see; but as your motives are good I will not take offence. Will and I were engaged."

"Exactly. Your father was opposed to the match?"

"He was."

"Did he know of the engagement?"

"He did not."

"Exactly—"

"And it was wrong, very wrong, for us to act so," Laura interrupted. "I see it all now, and—and if poor papa was alive, I would never, never deceive him in that way again."

"Of course not," said the detective. "So you and William were engaged, the marriage to take place when you should come of age?"

"You have guessed the truth."

"All this in direct opposition to the wishes of your father?"

"Alas! yes."

"Your father and William quarreled?"

"I fear so."

"Exactly."

A short silence here ensued. At length Tom Tunnel said:

"The evidence is strong against Mr. Armor, but I am satisfied that he is not the guilty one. Now, Miss Ward, a few questions regarding your home life. Who constitute the household?"

The maiden gave the names of Mr. Stratton, his sister, and Edward Caro.

"Exactly. Who is this Edward Caro?"

"A young man in the employ of Mr. Stratton."

"What were the relations existing between Mr. Stratton and your father?"

"They were partners."

"Of course; but their social relations?"

"They were on the best of terms, of course."

"Why of course?"

"My father would not associate with a man, even in business, whom he could not trust and regard as a friend."

"Exactly."

The detective paused and reflected a moment.

"You are sure Mr. Stratton and your father were on the best of terms?"

"I am."

"Were they equal partners?"

"Oh, no; father owned the largest part of the business."

"Ah!"

Another silence.

"Miss Ward, what proportion of the business was owned by Charles Stratton?"

"I cannot say, but I believe about one-quarter."

"Has a will been found?"

"No."

"Are you the only heir?"

"I suppose so."

"Bear with me, Miss Ward, for it is only the best of motives that prompts me to question you so closely. I would ask what were the relations existing between yourself and your father's partner?"

"Sir?"

There was an indignant ring in the girl's voice.

"Don't misunderstand me, Miss. Was not Mr. Charles Stratton a particular friend, not to say, a warm admirer of yours?"

"I am not sure. Mr. Stratton was always friendly, of course."

"Exactly; and he has grown more so during the past few weeks?"

"Naturally, he has."

"Exactly. You respect him highly?"

"I do."

"Has it not struck you that this Mr. Stratton has been a great deal more friendly of late? Don't you think—"

"Stop, sir!" Laura cried, indignantly. "I will not answer any more of your questions."

"Very well; you need not, in that direction at least. I am already answered."

"What do you mean?"

"It doesn't matter. If you hear that William is in jail to-morrow you won't care. I mean to run the assassin to earth."

"But Will isn't the man."

"How do you know?"

"I—I know."

"Well?"

But Laura refused to say more just then, and the detective, turning to depart, said:

"I will not question you further to-night. At another time we will meet, and perhaps you will then be willing to tell all you know."

Tom hurried away, but not a hundred yards had he gone, when a hand fell on his shoulder and whirled him about.

"Tom Tunnel—scoundrel! What are you doing here?"

The detective stood face to face with Charles Stratton!

"Ah! Mr. Stratton! I am most happy to meet you."

The detective held out his hand.

The moonbeams streamed down into the face of Stratton, revealing its pallor, and the mild blue eyes flaming with rage.

He refused to shake with the detective.

"What is the trouble, Mr. Stratton?" questioned Tunnel coolly.

"I'll show you, you sneaking scoundrel!"

At the words he drew a revolver and thrust it into the face of the detective.

Tom Tunnel recoiled a step.

CHAPTER XVI.

WAS DETECTIVE TOM "DONE FOR"?

Charles Stratton had reason to be astonished at the quick move made by the detective at that instant.

Ere the mine-owner was aware of it, he found his revolver wrenched from his hand, and he stood disarmed before Tom Tunnel.

"Now, then, Charles, stand and deliver."

A cold ring of steel pressed the millionaire's temple.

Stratton recoiled with a shudder of alarm.

"Would you murder me?" he gasped.

"You attempted to murder me," growled Tunnel. "Isn't turn about fair play?"

"I—I was mad."

"Exactly," drawled the detective, "but it doesn't pay to let your passions run away with you in this style, my honorable friend. It would be bad, and might go hard with you, if you had two murders to answer for."

Stratton started and glared at the speaker.

The keen eyes of Tom Tunnel pierced the man's very soul.

"Good heavens, sir! what are you talking about?"

The mine-owner found his voice at last, and gave utterance to the above words.

"I meant what I said," coolly articulated the detective, still transfixing the millionaire with his eyes.

But Charles Stratton had recovered his equanimity, and returned the detective's glance with one of cool indifference.

"You must explain yourself," finally asserted Mr. Stratton. "You have invaded my house like a thief in the night, and I demand satisfaction."

"You know that I am a detective, Mr. Stratton?"

"I have heard you say so."

"And that I am seeking to find the man who murdered your partner in business?"

Again did Tom Tunnel transfix the millionaire with his glance, but he failed to detect the least embarrassment or alarm on the man's face.

"Have you found the man?"

"Not yet."

"It wasn't you, then, that made a futile attempt to arrest William Armor?"

"No."

"I thought it was."

"You were mistaken."

A short silence, and then the detective said:

"Now, see here, Mr. Stratton, let us understand each other. What do you know about this attempt to arrest young William Armor?"

"Nothing."

"You are not dealing honestly with me."

"I am."

"You would like to see the assassin of Harry Ward brought to justice?"

"If there is such a man."

"Do you doubt?"

"I do. I am still of the opinion that Harry Ward came to his death in an accidental manner."

"Then you do not think William guilty?"

"Of murder? Certainly not. He's a hot-headed young scamp, and unprincipled, but I can't and won't believe he is a murderer."

The detective was puzzled, perhaps surprised.

Stratton was now utterly cool.

"I can assure you that I know that your partner was murdered," asserted the detective, after a minute of reflection.

"Ah, you know this?"

"I do."

"Then you may count on me to assist in finding the assassin."

"I am glad to hear you say that."

"If the old gentleman was murdered, William Armor is the assassin, without a doubt. You must ferret out his place of concealment; I should think. You once worked up a more difficult case."

"Admitted," said Tom Tunnel. "I think I shall be able to put my hand on the murderer before long."

"That is all right, but I don't exactly like your sneaking around my house as you did to-night. If you want to see any of the inmates, why not come to the house like a man, and make known your wants? This sneaking, cowardly way, such as you adopted to-night, provoked me beyond measure."

"I see that it did. I had my reasons for acting as I did, however."

"What were they?"

"I cannot give them now."

"Do you know what I think of you?"

"What?"

"That you're a cheat."

A smile swept the face of the detective.

"No use, Mr. Stratton, you and me trying cross-horns. Let's be friends."

This time the millionaire accepted the hand of the detective.

"Could these two be friends in the future?"

Tom Tunnel did not believe it. He fancied that underlying the present smooth exterior of Mr. Stratton was a plotting, vengeful heart, and he resolved always to be on his guard while in the presence of the millionaire mine-owner.

"Give me my revolver and I will go, Mr. Tunnel."

Without a word the detective handed over the weapon, at the same time bringing forward one of his own, with which he covered the heart of the mine-owner.

"If you attempt to use that pistol, I'll bore you."

"Bah! What a coward!"

Then, with this sneering remark, Charles Stratton strode from the spot.

Tom Tunnel watched him until his tall, slender form was lost to view; then he turned and retraced his steps to the spot where he had left Laura.

The girl had departed.

For some moments the detective stood deeply reflecting.

"I am puzzled to know who set the officers on track of Will Armor," he uttered. "I have an idea that the real assassin is endeavoring to cover his tracks by bringing the young man to the front. It is bad, Will's defiance of the officers, and he will be considered guilty now, and hunted with venomous hatred by the minions of the law. I am sorry this happened. I hope the youngster will keep out of the clutches of his enemies until I can sift this affair a little deeper. I am sure that the big man with the serpent eyes, full of devilish

cunning, knows something of this murder. Mike Jones, that is his name, and it seems that between us it is to be war to the death. So let it be! Jones may be the man I want; but what was his motive? Ordinary robbery? I will not believe it."

Tom passed down, turning his steps toward the suburbs of the city.

In a little time he stood before a low building that occupied the center of a large lot.

He was without the city limits now.

No light shone from the windows of the house.

The moon went under a cloud, and the detective's form was in deep shadow.

A prowler suddenly rose from a crouching posture, not ten feet behind the unsuspecting detective. A pair of glittering, serpent eyes pierced the darkness, and seemed to burn like living coals, as they were fixed on the form of Tom Tunnel.

Immovable as a statue stood the detective, while an enemy was creeping upon him from behind.

Would he be warned in time?

Nearer and nearer crept the human tiger. An instant later he leaped forward, and—

Thud!

It was a sickening sound, that meant death, perhaps, to the unsuspecting detective.

When a moment later the moon came out from its mantle of clouds, it revealed a silent form on the ground, with pallid, upturned face.

Standing over the body was a giant form, a pair of gleaming triumphant eyes glowing down upon the silent face of Tom Tunnel, the great detective.

"It is well," muttered the assassin. "The fool ought to have known better than to attempt coping with Mike Jones, the Chicago Crook-Chief."

Then the man uttered a low, plaintive whistle, which was answered by the sudden appearance of a third party—a short stout man, whose short curls and jaunty hat gave him a natty appearance.

CHAPTER XVII.

WAS IT A NEW CLEW?

"You've fixed him, Mike."

"You bet. I never miscalculate," said the large man, indulging in a low chuckle. "Tom once got the start of Mike Jones, but he won't do it again. I don't see what possessed the fool to follow me to the copper regions. I ought to have dumped him in the lake before the Lake Queen landed."

"Yes, it would have been well to have sent him to join old Ward," uttered the second man.

"Well, he won't trouble us after to-night."

"No, but the local police will kick up a dust when they find the body."

"But they won't find it."

"What will you do?"

"Just lend a hand, and I'll show you."

And then the two men bent down and lifted the body from the ground, and moved toward the rear of the old house, Mike Jones in advance.

When they came to a pause, it was beside the curb of an old well.

"In there?" questioned the short man, as he gazed over the curb into the damp, bottomless depths of the well.

"In there," was the laconic reply.

The two men lifted the body, balanced it a moment over the opening, and then released their hold.

Swiftly the body shot from sight.

A dull thud came from the darkness below, accompanied by a low cry.

"By thunder!" exclaimed the short man; "I—"

"Stop!" growled Jones, interrupting the man's speech. "You talk too loud and too much."

"But the fellow wasn't dead."

"Nonsense."

"I heard him cry out as he struck down yonder," and then the short man shuddered.

"Tush! You're a fool, young fellow. It

was our only salvation to put Tom Tunnel out of the world."

"Of course; but he was alive when he went into that well just now."

"If he was, he's dead enough now; but to make sure, we'll fill up the well, then he won't get out, I reckon."

This devilish proposition was received with a shudder by the big gambler's companion.

Evidently he was not so crime-hardened as was the Chicago crook.

Jones lifted a block of wood from the ground and approached the well. He hurled it over, and then turned away.

His ears were greeted with the sound of voices.

"Come," whispered his companion. "let's get out of this."

"You're nervous, youngster."

"Can't help it."

"Come this way."

The big gambler glided away, closely followed by his somewhat scrupulous companion.

An hour later Mike Jones entered a saloon on the main street of the city. He was alone now, and walked straight to the bar.

After swallowing a glass of hot poison he went to an empty table and sat down, drawing his wide-rimmed hat low over his eyes, while he watched the movements of the people who lingered about the room, drank whisky or beer, and went out.

The stout gambler was in good humor to-night, as well he might be.

There was but one man in the Northwest he feared, and that man was dead. He certainly could afford to congratulate himself on the situation.

While he sat watching the proceedings a short man came in, paused an instant on the threshold, and then walked directly to the bar. After drinking he sauntered on and sank into a chair, within a few feet of Mike Jones.

"Will you play?"

Thus asked the stranger, whose red beard and hair were a flame color, and exceedingly abundant.

"Would a horse eat when he was hungry?" answered Jones. Then he called for cards, and over foaming mugs of beer the two were playing an interesting game.

Occasionally Jones would glance sharply into the face of his companion.

"How do you like it, pard?"

"Eh?"

"My fix-up."

Mike Jones glanced sharply, more scrutinizingly than ever at the man, and at length said:

"Good. I've been trying to read you all along. Your disguise is complete."

"I imagined it would be. That was a good job to-night."

"Excellent."

"We have nothing more to fear?"

"Nothing."

The last comer rubbed his left ear and smiled.

"Only a little time, and we are rich men, Mike."

"Precisely."

"We must not forget William Armor, however."

"No; where is he?"

"I don't know. He can't be far away, however. You are sure that your evidence will convict him?"

"Of course. Durn it, boy, he is the murderer."

"No?" an incredulous look coming to the face of the red-bearded man.

"It is the truth. William Armor saved us the job."

"That is lucky; but what use, then, in putting the detective under?"

"That was my affair, and the truth might come out, you know, with him poking his nose into our affairs."

"Quite true."

"You ought to be satisfied."

"I am; but William?"

"We will find him in good time."

"Has Jim come down with any more money lately?"

"No."

"I am sorry," said the short man. "I'm getting close up with my salary, and you know he promised to divide evenly between us."

"Yes, of course, and he will keep his word."

"You know him, then?"

"Of course."

"Just tell me his name."

Mike Jones leaned forward and whispered in the ear of his companion.

What he said seemed to have wonderful effect, for the short man started and dropped his cards.

"It's mighty close in here; let's go outside," and the red-haired man sprang to his feet.

"Better go home," suggested the gambler, in a low tone; "I will see you again to-morrow at this time; before that Will may be found, you know."

Without a word the last comer hurried from the saloon, and pushed his way toward the residence part of the city.

He was shadowed, however, for the moment he left the saloon a shadower followed noiselessly in the footsteps of the red-haired villain, and was but a few feet behind when the man entered a house.

Outside the shadow waited.

It was but a little time, when the man came out and moved once more.

In a little time he gained the vicinity of the Ward mansion. Pausing, he glanced up at a window from which a light glowed.

"Ah, how I would like to possess that glorious girl! But she is not for me. I must content myself with money that will permit me to engage in gambling. How long this is to last God only knows!"

Then the man passed on, and was soon in a small room under the roof of a cheap boarding-house. He lit the lamp and threw himself into a chair. A white, haggard face it was that the light revealed, rather boyish in its outline, however.

The "shadow" paused outside, and a single eye glared in at the window.

He had trailed the gambler's friend to his den, and there he sat, under the glow of the lamp, without disguise, and was at once recognized by the person who had so pertinaciously clung to his trail.

Who was the man who gazed in upon the young gambler's accomplice in crime?

We cannot reveal his identity here, but the face within the little room, so plainly revealed by the glow of the lamp, was the face of Charles Stratton's clerk, Edward Caro!

CHAPTER XVIII.

WILL ARMOR IN A FIX.

It was the evening following the events recorded in the last chapter.

Mr. Charles Stratton and his sister had been closeted together for more than an hour, talking over business affairs, and Laura, who had been in her room most of the afternoon, suddenly became restless and uneasy.

Her interview with the great detective on the evening previous had been utterly unsatisfactory. It was evident that he believed Will a wronged man, yet he was determined on hunting down the criminal, whoever he might be.

She could not help admitting that Stratton had been unusually kind, not to say attentive, to her since the death of her parent, but, until the questioning of Tom Tunnel, she thought there could be nothing wrong in this.

Now her mind was filled with doubt and fears.

She had not met Will in many weeks, and now an uncontrollable desire to see her lover possessed the girl.

"How hot and uncomfortable it is here," uttered Laura, going to the window and peering out into the gloom.

A white streak along the horizon told that the moon was over yonder, smiling on the waters of the great inland sea,

that swelled and moaned in its vastness to the north and east.

"The air is cool outside, and I shall feel better to take a stroll."

Drawing a light summer shawl over her head, Laura passed from the room.

In a little time she was in the open air.

The cool lake breezes revived her drooping energies, and as she walked across the velvet lawn her spirits rose, and she felt stronger.

At length she paused under a tree, and leaned against the fence that separated the Ward lot from that of a neighbor.

She stood for some minutes looking at the moon creeping up the heavens.

Of a sudden a crackling of twigs startled her. A man's form arose suddenly from a clump of bushes on the opposite side of the fence, and strode toward Laura.

The maiden was frightened and started to flee.

"Laura!"

A low voice called her name.

She paused and looked back.

"Laura, do not flee. I will not harm you. Don't you know me, little girl?"

"Oh, Will!"

At once Laura darted toward the stalwart intruder, and was folded to his heart.

For three minutes not a word was uttered.

"Oh, Will! I have wanted to see you so much, and tell you all my troubles."

"Yes," said Will.

Then another silence followed.

"Where have you been so long, Will?"

"Hiding away from the officers."

"Oh, Will!" and Laura shuddered as she nestled more closely in the arms of her lover.

"Don't trouble yourself on my account," urged Will. "I don't mean to give myself up at present. Circumstantial evidence is too strong against me."

"And you might be convicted?"

"Yes."

She drew away from him then suddenly.

"Will, you are not guilty?"

"You know that I am not, Laura!"

"Yet you resisted arrest, and are even now in hiding. Many people will turn against you, who would otherwise be your friends. Oh, Will, Will! I fear you have made a grave mistake."

Laura covered her face with her hands, and seemed quite overcome for the time.

The fugitive stood with folded arms regarding the girl in silence. What his emotions, his thoughts, we do not know, but doubtless there was something of bitterness in his heart as he realized that even his betrothed wife was standing on the side of his enemies, and blaming him for the course he had taken.

"Laura, look at me."

Low and stern came the words.

The maiden dropped her hands at once, and through her tears looked into his face.

"Laura, you say I have done wrong. Have you ceased to love me? Do you imagine I had aught to do with the removal of your father, that I might marry his daughter, and revel in his wealth—"

"Oh, Will!"

"If you cannot trust me, let us part forever. I would not believe wrong of you, Laura, let the dear people say what they would. I am a fugitive, with a price upon my head, and I sought you now to know exactly how you stood. I am here now awaiting your judgment."

He bowed his head and waited for her to speak.

Sobs alone greeted his ear.

"Laura, this is pitiful," he cried, in a louder voice than he meant to use, confronting her with flashing eyes once more. "Tell me quickly, and in plain words, your opinion. Am I guilty or not?"

"Oh, Will—Will—"

"Stop!" sternly. "I want your answer."

"What shall I say?"

"Do you believe me guilty of murder? I wish you to answer that question."

"Will—Will, you know I do not believe you guilty."

She had brushed away her tears, and become suddenly calm under the power of exerted will.

"God bless you, Laura!"

Once more he opened his arms, and she rushed forward, pillowing her head upon his breast, and for a time the lovers were lost to all their surroundings. The awakening was far from pleasant.

A hand fell on the shoulder of William Armor, and a voice hissed in his ear:

"I have you, scoundrel! Come with me peaceably, or die!"

Laura uttered a little shriek, and would have clung to her lover, had he not pushed her from him; then he turned and looked into the face of Charles Stratton!

The moonbeams revealed the faces of the men plainly—Will's dark and defiant, the mine-owner's pale, yet full of rigid determination, as he pushed a gleaming revolver against the breast of the outlawed fugitive.

"Surrender, murderer!"

"Put up your pistol, Mr. Stratton," ordered Will, coolly. "You know that I am not a murderer any more than you are."

"I cannot bandy words. Come, or I fire!"

"If you shoot, you will but add another murder to the one already committed. Go slow, Mr. Stratton, or it will be worse for you."

At this moment Laura stepped forward and interfered.

"Go to the house, girl!" commanded the millionaire, angrily.

She recoiled and dared not retaliate.

"Coward!" hissed Will.

The next instant he seized Stratton by the wrist and wrenched the revolver from his grasp.

The millionaire was no mean antagonist, as Will was soon to discover to his cost. The moment he lost his weapon, Stratton flung himself upon the young man, and attempted to hurl him to the ground.

"Release me!" hissed Will.

"Help! Help! Murder!"

Loud and clear rang the voice of the millionaire.

Will realized at once the dangers of his position.

He heard a door open at the next house, and knew that soon men would be hurrying to the spot.

"Stop that yelling!"

"Help! Murder!"

Will's digits closed about the throat of the howling mine-owner, and further articulation was suddenly shut off.

"Will—Will, look out! You are killing him!" screamed Laura, springing forward and seizing the arm of her lover. He turned upon her fiercely.

"Take away your hands, Laura," he said, hoarsely. "Don't you see they are coming—my enemies?"

Steps and voices were plainly heard approaching.

Yet still Laura clung to the arm of Will.

Stratton, choked now to insensibility, sank to the ground. Free from him, the young Detroitier turned upon the approaching people like a stag at bay.

Moaning with fright, Laura still clung to the arm of her lover.

"Release me!"

But, the girl only clung the tighter, and it was only at the last moment that Will, determined not to be captured, tore the maiden's clutch from his arm, and flung her from him sharply.

She reeled and fell prostrate, upon the form of her guardian.

There was no time to tarry if he would escape, and Will darted swiftly away.

"Stop him! stop him! It's William Armor, the murderer!"

Charles Stratton had recovered his

tially from his choking, and now uttered the shout.

Several men had been attracted to the grounds, and at this startling announcement circled out to cut off retreat.

Will was desperate now, and with the butt of his revolver he laid the first man who crossed his path low.

On the instant, however, a fierce howl filled the air, and the next moment a savage bull-dog dashed from the rear of the house, and pounced upon the fugitive.

CHAPTER XIX.

*TRAPPED BY A GROAN.

The huge dog closed his jaws upon Will's coat in the rear, and sank back with closed eyes and deadly grip. The cloth was strong, and the dog heavy, so the fugitive realized that it would be impossible to escape without disposing of the brute.

Thrusting his revolver behind him, he fired.

He felt the dog loosen suddenly, and once more brave Will Armor bounded away.

One man crossed his path, only to go down before the on-rush of the fugitive.

"Don't let him escape!" screamed Stratton. "Shoot the villain—shoot, shoot!"

Most of the men were unarmed, however.

Only one shot was fired, and that whistled wide of the mark. Soon Will was on the street, and walking with great rapidity toward the heart of Ishpeming. He realized that to be seen on the main thoroughfare meant instant capture, since the whole city was on the lookout for him; consequently after going a short distance, he changed his course, and was soon moving toward the suburbs of the town.

Soon the whole city would be in arms, for Charles Stratton would not rest while a single hope remained for capturing the assassin of his partner that night.

Will believed he understood why Stratton was so terribly anxious to secure him.

With rapid strides Will entered the poorly lit streets, far from the centre of the busy city, and he was congratulating himself on his lucky escape from the environs so lately thrown about him, when he felt a hand fall upon his shoulder, while, at the same time, a ring of cold steel was pressed against his temple.

"Do you cave, youngster?"

Will turned instantly upon the speaker.

A pair of gleaming eyes, full of a serpent's cunning, were fixed upon his face—eyes that had haunted him since the night of that awful tragedy on the lake, now many weeks ago.

"Who are you?" demanded Will, with a nonchalant stare at the interrupter of his walk.

"I want you."

"You can't have me."

With the words, William Armor swung round, and ere the big man with the cunning eyes was aware of his intention, he received a blow between the eyes, that reeled him back as an ox might reel under the butcher's ax.

When he recovered William Armor had disappeared.

"Well, I'll be booted!" exclaimed the man, rubbing his forehead, with a grimace; "that fellow struck like a kicking mule."

Footsteps fell on his ear, and the next moment a short man paused at the huge man's side.

"Ha! is this you, Ed?"

"Yes. What's the racket, pard?"

"Nothing, only Will Armor's close by. He gave me a tap on the scone that made me see stars."

"The fellow is bold to come around when a reward awaits his captor."

"You bet."

"Let us look for him."

"It would be like hunting for a needle

in a straw-stack," averred the big man, who was no less a personage than Mike Jones, the Chicago crook.

"I am sorry you did not hold him."

"Wal, so am I. The reward would have come good to us, Ed."

"It would," said Edward Caro, with a sigh.

He was even now on his way to one of the gambling hells of the city, anxious to drown the cares of his young life at the gaming-table, and it was only by accident that he ran upon the big Chicagoan.

"Are you going to try your luck again to-night, Ed?"

"Yes."

"At the Crescent?"

"I had thought of it."

"Better go with me, instead."

"Where?"

"To Little Hal's."

"That's rather a low place, isn't it, Mike?"

The big man laughed.

"You're getting particular, boy. Haven't you learned to trust me? I won't take you to any place where your morals will become corrupted—oh, no. Ha, ha, ha!"

Edward Caro, young in years, was yet fast learning the ways of the underdrain of wickedness that permeated the social structure. Once he would have shuddered and drawn away from such a man as Mike Jones. Now, however, he received his words with a laugh.

"You're an excellent moral teacher," he said. "I wonder you don't join the church."

"I'm too honest for that," answered Jones.

Caro had once been a teacher in the Sabbath-school, and the words of Jones cut him severely. He was becoming calloused, however, and passed the remark by with a laugh.

"Let's be moving, Mike."

"I am ready. If you follow me, Little Hal will have two customers to-night."

"All right. I follow, where you lead."

The two men turned their faces toward the heart of the city, and hurried away.

In the mean time the fugitive from justice, William Armor, made his way quickly from the vicinity of the spot where the Chicago crook had attempted his onset, and soon gained the outskirts of Ishpeming.

He was crossing a lot not far from an old house that stood without the city limits. It was beneath this tenantless dwelling that Will had at times found shelter. He intended to steal into the cellar now and rest for a time, and then proceed to the woods not far away.

Beside the old well Will came to a pause, and leaned against the curb.

He breathed rapidly, for during the past ten minutes he had been making quick time.

While leaning thus against the well-curb, Will's ears were saluted with a startling sound.

A groan that seemed to come from the bowels of the earth.

Will held his breath and listened.

The groan was repeated.

The youth looked sharply about. Seeing no one, he moved toward the house. Near the porch he listened, but the groan was not heard again.

"I am sure I heard a human voice," mused Will. "I will go back to the well and listen."

Again the groan came from the well.

Will was quite startled. Surely a human being must be in the well, but he was puzzled to know how any one could fall thirty feet without being killed instantly.

Will thrust his face down over the curb.

"Hello!"

His voice sounded hollow and unnatural.

No answer came to his hail, save a repetition of that solemn, mournful groan.

"Hello!" again uttered Will. "Who's in the well?"

A moment of silence, and then, faint and husky, came the words to the strained ear of the listener.

"Who calls?"

"A friend," answered Will.

"Then, for the love of Heaven! get me out of this!"

The words were scarcely audible, but Will caught their meaning, and he at once hastened to the house, remembering that he had seen a rope coiled up in a back shed.

Soon he returned, and once more spoke to the man in the well.

No answer was vouchsafed.

"I will let down a rope, which you secure to your body, and then I'll draw you up."

Thus Will called down the damp tube, and immediately thereafter he lowered the rope.

He waited some minutes, and then lifted on the rope; it came up easily, thus proving that the person below had not secured it.

"Hello!" again called Will.

No answer came, and the youth judged rightly that the poor wretch had lost consciousness.

"There's no help for it," muttered Armor, "I must not permit the poor fellow down yonder to perish without an attempt to rescue him. There is but one way; I must enter the well myself."

After a careful survey of the premises, to make sure that no enemy lurked near, the young Detrolter made fast his rope to the body of a stump near by, and then boldly launched himself into the well.

Quickly Will lowered himself in the bowels of the earth. The walls were damp and slimy, but he minded them not, and soon stood beside a crouching figure that neither moved nor groaned to his touch.

It was too dark to distinguish faces, so Will failed to recognize the man.

"Poor fellow!" muttered Will, as he adjusted the rope about his body, under the arms; "he'll never come out of this alive."

Soon Will began the ascent.

It was a difficult task, the walls of the well being slippery.

Will, however, had sailed on the lakes, and was good at climbing a rope.

Slowly he toiled upward.

He could see the stars in the blue vault of heaven as he looked up occasionally.

Two-thirds of the ascent he had made, when a sharp jerk on the rope startled him. Perhaps it came from below. He threw his head back and glanced upward.

What he saw sent a startled thrill through the young rescuer's frame. And well it might.

A human head and shoulders—a man's—were framed in the square opening above!

William Armor was in a trap!

CHAPTER XX.

A QUEER COMPACT.

For some moments William Armor hung swaying in the air, so completely taken back as to lose his presence of mind for the time.

"Great Caesar, man! what you doin' down yon?"

A feeling of relief came to the heart of Will Armor when he heard these words. He was not recognized, neither did he know the man who had spoken, and there was yet a chance open for escape.

"Give me a lift, will you?" said Will, boldly.

"Sartin."

The man above began drawing Will up by main strength, and soon the youth was on terra firma once more.

No one was near but the man who had rescued him, aside from Will himself. The Detrolter breathed easier.

The light of the moon revealed the stranger plainly, and showed Will a

queer-looking individual, indeed. A tall, stooping form, bristling black hair, and long sandy beard. One eye was covered with a huge black patch. A slouch hat was drawn low over the single eye of the stranger.

"Who are you?"

Involuntarily the question fell from the lips of the young man. He might have met this singular individual before, but, if so, he had no memory of it now.

"I'm Stiles."

"How?"

"My name is Hiram Stiles. Now, what's yours?"

"Jackson."

"You don't say?"

"I do say so!" asserted Will.

"It beats the daylight how many Jacksons there is in this 'ere town. I s'pose you'll be telling me, pretty soon, that yer name's Pat Jackson?"

"No, that would be a lie, for my name is Henry Jackson!"

"It's a lie, all the same!"

"Fellow, be careful!"

"Who's afraid? I ain't. When a man lies to me I allus tell him so."

Will was astonished at the man's cool insolence. He thought of the man in the well, and believed it about time to set about rescuing him.

"Never mind; I won't quarrel with you," said Will. "Good-night, Mr. Stiles!"

"But I ain't goin' yet."

"You had better."

"Why?"

Will laid his hand on the butt of a concealed pistol. He saw the single eye of the stranger glaring at him like a ball of fire.

"Don't pull yer shooter, young man. I don't want to hurt ye, and there's no use you'n me quarrelin' over the fact that your name isn't Jackson, although you said it was."

"Yes! I will have no more to do with you," growled Will, fiercely.

"Oh, yes, you will," answered the one-eyed stranger, giving vent to a low laugh.

Will felt like attacking and hurling the stranger into the well, but he curbed his wrath as best he could, and said:

"You are mighty impudent, old chap. I—"

"Hold up," commanded Stiles, with a gesture of impatience. "Let us come to an understanding at once. Of course, you won't deny that it was untrue when you said your name was Jackson. I do not blame you for denying your name, but do you think you can deceive the Heavenly Judge? Impossible."

"Look here—"

"Stop and listen. I know why you wished to disguise yourself under a false name. You are a murderer!"

"That is false."

Nevertheless Will started and trembled.

"You cannot hide yourself from me. I know you too well, William Armor!"

The young Detroitier took a quick backward step and drew his revolver, but his arm was seized and pushed aside with the quickness of lightning, and on the instant Will found himself looking into the open nose of a six-shooter.

The one-eyed stranger had been too quick for him.

Will was at his mercy.

He awaited the outcome in silence.

"Shoot, if you wish to murder me!" uttered Will.

"I do not," answered the stranger. "I wish to ask you one question; on the answer your life depends."

"Speak! Let me hear what you would say!"

"Did you kill Harry Ward?"

"Of course not."

"Your answer is flippant. I believe you are guilty. Because you could not gain the old man's consent for you to wed his daughter you coolly and deliberately plunged a dagger into his bosom and flung him into the bosom of Superior. Come you must meet the ministers

of justice, and in open court answer to the charge of murder."

There was a changed ring in the stranger's voice, and Will knew by the stern expression that the man was not what he seemed, but doubtless a detective in disguise.

"You are mistaken, sir!" uttered Will. "I am innocent of this terrible crime. Mr. Ward and I did quarrel, but I would sooner have died than harm a hair of the head belonging to the father of the girl I loved. I swear that I am speaking truly. Release me, that I may hunt down the real assassin, for that I have set out to do."

Hiram Stiles hesitated a moment; then his hand fell from the arm of the fugitive.

"I believe you, youngster. Let us be friends, my boy."

Stiles had lowered his pistol, and now held out his hand, which the youth grasped in a warm clasp.

"Friends it is, old fellow," declared Will, heartily; "and since you know me, it wouldn't be more than fair to let me know your name."

"I have given it to you."

"As Stiles, which is further from your name than Jackson is from mine."

The man laughed.

"Mebbe we'll know each other better by and by."

"Don't go," cried Will, as Stiles turned to depart. "There's a man in the well, and I want help to get him out of the place"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ROGUES AGAIN ON THE TRAIL.

"Eh? A man in the well?" repeated Stiles.

"It's a fact," assured Will.

"How came he there?"

"Can't say."

"You were down looking after him just now?"

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"Can't say. I have a rope around the poor fellow, and if you will assist me, we will pull him up. He has fainted, and I fear is not long for this world."

"Of course I'll help you."

The two men seized the rope and began drawing it up. In a little time they landed the insensible occupant of the well on the ground above.

The moon came out, and plainly revealed the man's face, which now had no disguise upon it.

"My soul! It's Tom Tunnel!" exclaimed Will.

"The detective!" cried Stiles. "Well, well, here's a go, and no mistake! The poor fellow's goin' ter die, I take it. Who could have put him into that hole?"

"I do not know, but I can guess."

"Well?"

"Men who wish Tom Tunnel out of the way, because he is trailing them too closely."

"Yes, but who's he arter now?"

"The assassin of Harry Ward."

"Ah!"

The two men then rubbed and shook the detective in an attempt to resuscitate him. It was a vain effort, however.

"What in the world are we to do?" cried Will, at last, in a helpless tone.

"The poor fellow will die here without medical attendance. His head is covered with blood, and it is evident that he has had hard usage."

"Hard, indeed," acquiesced Stiles.

"I'll tell ye what, Will; we must carry the feller to some house."

"Certainly."

"I know just the place, on the mining road, half a mile out of town. It would be the safest place for him."

"Lend a hand."

Lifting the still insensible detective, the two rescuers moved away. They were already beyond the limits of the city, and after pausing twice to rest they finally halted in the woods in front of a log house of considerable dimensions.

Although the hour was late, a light was still burning in the front room of the house.

"It will hardly do for me to enter here," demurred the young man.

"Not necessary," answered Stiles. "I know ole Ben Arnold well, an' he'll lend a hand, and glad ter do it, fer Hiram Stiles."

Will stepped into the shadow as the tall, ungainly Stiles rapped on the door.

A man opened it, and after one uttered exclamation, listened to the story of Hiram Stiles with interest.

"Jest take the poor feller in and doctor him up, and you sha'n't go unrewarded," assured Stiles at the last.

"Certainly I will. Mercy on us, how did you bring him here all alone?" cried Ben Arnold, the white-haired old settler, as he bent over the silent form of the detective.

"Don't ask questions, Ben!" uttered Stiles. "You can trust me. You know there's a lot of deviltry in the land that needs unearthing, and you promised me."

"Yes, yes!" assented Ben Arnold, interrupting the speaker with a gesture. "Jest command me, sir, and I will obey."

As may be supposed, William Armor was considerably surprised at the words passing between the seeming tramp and Ben Arnold. He was now more than ever convinced that the one-eyed man was not what he seemed, but a sharp detective in disguise.

The insensible Tom Tunnel was lifted from the ground and borne to the interior of the house.

Will believed it a good time to depart, so he hurried quickly from the spot, seeking shelter in the forest.

With a price upon his head the young man felt like a hunted criminal indeed, and his days of hiding were days of mental and bodily suffering, that Will could not have undergone a second time, even to escape the walls of a prison.

Hiram Stiles remained nearly an hour in the house of Ben Arnold.

When he came out he made no effort to look after Will, evidently satisfied that his young friend had departed.

"The mystery deepens," muttered Stiles, as he strode away toward the city. "I am pretty well satisfied now that Will is innocent, and that the death of Harry Ward was the result of a base plot. I must next take in the old house on the avenue. I think I might learn something worth hearing there."

In the mean time the stricken detective lay on a clean bed, in a bed room opening off the front apartment of the settler's home, and over him stood Mr. and Mrs. Arnold.

The detective at length opened his eyes and groaned, after his head had been washed of the blood-clots that had formed there.

"He's powerful bad hurt," declared Mrs. Arnold, a motherly woman of fifty. "It's likely as any way he will die."

"No, mother, he won't."

"I fear he will."

"But—er—Stiles says we must cure him. He will send a doctor over to-night to look after the poor fellow."

"Laws sakes! what times we're havin'," uttered the good woman. "Poor Mr. Ward, to go the way he did; and William Armor, who, they do say, was a smart, likely young fellow, hidin' away coz he murdered Laura's father, and she to marry a man old enough to be her father."

"What's that, mother?"

"Bout the girl?"

"Ye—"

"She's goin' to marry Mr. Stratton."

"I don't believe it."

"Well, girls are fools, and Laura hain't no exception," asserted Mrs. Arnold. "No doubt she driv' Will to desperation, so't he killed her father, and then she up and turns her back on him, and marries her father's partner. It don't look right."

"No, it don't," said Ben, "and I won't believe it."

"What is it you won't believe?"

"Two things—that Laura has gone back on William Armor, and that she's going to marry Charles Stratton," said the old man grimly.

"You can believe as you like. I know it's so," asserted the good woman.

"Then I've got a suspicion that'll startle some folks, if it turns out to be true," asserted the old man.

The eyes of Tom Tunnel, though but partly open, were not yet sightless, and in a half dazed way he listened to the words of the old couple. Even in his helplessness he was to learn something to his advantage.

None of the trio saw the pair of gleaming eyes that shone like coals of fire, just above the sill of the bed room window; had they done so, perhaps a terrible tragedy might have been avoided.

It is impossible for mortals to read the future, however.

The gleaming eyes were watching every movement of the people within, and a pair of acute ears were listening to the words passing between the two old people.

Had Will waited a little longer he might have made a discovery that would have given him a clue to the fathoming of a deep mystery; but he was not in the vicinity when a dark form crept to the end of the house and peered in at the window of the little room in which Tom Tunnel, the detective, lay, badly hurt.

One glance into the night-prowler's face reveals the fact that he wears a black mask.

We have looked upon this man before.

It is Jim, the friend and patron of Mike Jones, the Chicago Crook Chief.

How he came to be in this vicinity it is not necessary to explain, since, like other rascals, he was liable to turn up in out-of-the-way places when least expected.

Jim's eyes were fixed, in an intense way, on the scene transpiring within that humble room of the old settler's home.

Occasionally he grated his teeth, and seemed to writhe in an agony of terrible feeling.

"Tom Tunnel lives!" muttered the mask, under his breath. "Not six hours ago Jones assured me that he was removed from the trail, never more to return. I cannot understand this. What sorcery is this, that resurrects the demon man-hunter at the very moment that victory is complete? But, the sleuth-hound must never leave this house alive—never! I will see to that. One crime leads to another, and I will now see a score of lives out of existence, but what I will win the game."

It will be seen that, although the detective had been rescued from the dry well, and was even now in good hands, he was not out of the shadow of death.

Jim withdrew to the road.

The sound of hoofs caused him to pause and crouch low.

A mounted man drew rein at the settler's door.

"It is the doctor," muttered Jim. "I will go back and listen to his verdict."

Suiting actions to words, the masked villain crept back to his position under the window.

Here he remained until after the doctor's departure, and then he hurried from the vicinity, turning his steps in the direction of the city.

It was after midnight that the mask and Mike Jones were in consultation, in a small room in the rear of one of Ishpeming's lowest dives. What the import of their consultation was concerns not the reader now, but may come to light hereafter.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MYSTERIOUS TRAMP'S MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE.

It was with painful interest that Laura waited to meet Mr. Stratton on the morning following the scene in the grounds.

The mine-owner, however, did not materialize that morning. Instead, his sister gave Laura the information she so much desired.

"And Will was not captured, after all?" cried Laura, her cheeks aglow, her beautiful eyes sparkling.

"Not that we have yet learned. It was very imprudent in you, Laura, to meet this man in a clandestine way. What would people say did they know that you held converse with the man believed to be the murderer of your father?"

"Oh, Grace!"

"People will talk, you know, and I think you have been very imprudent, to draw it mildly."

The rebuking gaze of Miss Stratton quite overcame the fair girl, and she hid her face in her hands.

"I am glad you feel the enormity of your sin," said Miss Stratton, severely. "Mr. Stratton is terribly worked up over it, and will endeavor to keep your part in the transaction from the public. You don't half appreciate that dear, good man, Laura."

"I—I fear I don't."

"He is deeply devoted to you, my dear, and your cool treatment of him has almost broken his heart."

Just then the door-bell sounded, and soon Grace heard the servant who had answered it quarreling with some one on the steps.

"The impudence of some people," muttered the usually good-natured Grace, hurrying to the hall.

In the open doorway stood a man who persisted in forcing himself upon the attention of the inmates of the mansion.

It was Hiram Stiles, and, as he leaned beyond the door-frame, his single eye glared into Grace's face with extraordinary intensity.

"A tramp, mum, and he insists on seein' the master," said Mary to her mistress, the moment that lady stepped into the hall.

Taking advantage of the servant's turned head, Stiles pushed his way into the hall, and confronted Miss Stratton.

"Yes, I'm a-gwine to see the boss," said Stiles in his peculiar nasal tone. "I used ter work fur old Harry Ward down ter Detroit, I did, and I know, ef he was here, he'd gin me a crust to eat, and a good soft place besides."

At first Grace seemed to quail beneath the keen glow of that penetrating single eye; it was but for a moment, however, and then she was her cool courageous self once more.

"Out of this house, man. I'll summon the men—"

"Go slow, go slow," interrupted the tramp, with an inward chuckle. "Mebbe you would jest tell that brother o' yours that Hiram Stiles wants ter see him."

"Brother Charles is down at the office."

"So?"

"Yes. Now go, or—"

"Wait," commanded Mr. Stiles, with a flourishing of his long arm. "I'm hungry; gin me somethin' to fill my bread-basket and I'll tramp; not afore. Golly! many's the time old Harry Ward's set at the same table with me, and thought none the worse on't. He was a man, every inch on him, but now he's gone to t'other side of the river, they tell me."

A groan oozed from the lips of the old tramp, but it failed to touch the heart of Miss Stratton, who ordered him out of the house once more, and in a louder voice than usual.

The loud talk brought Laura into the hall.

"Ah, thar's ole Harry's gal! Don't you 'member me, Laura?" and the tramp held out his hand as the maiden approached.

Laura started back, nervously, when she glanced into the man's disfigured face.

"No, no; I do not remember you," cried the girl, trembling with nervous fright.

"Wal, 'tain't no wonder," remarked Stiles. "When I worked fur yer pa. down

ter Detroit, I was a sightly person to look at, but I was blowed up on a steam-tug, and it putty much spoiled my beauty, I allow. I did work fur Mr. Ward, and, fur the sake of old times, I wish you would give me a bite to eat."

The man's single eye was roaming about, from face to face, and to the pictures on the wall, while he talked.

Laura's sympathetic heart was touched at once, and she told the tramp to go around to the kitchen and he should have his fill of food.

Grace did not seem to relish this assumption of authority on the maiden's part; but when Laura chose to assert her rights, no one ever attempted to say her nay.

The tramp went around to the kitchen, and was soon seated before a substantial repast.

The man did not seem to be ravenously hungry, however, and occupied much of his time staring about and keeping his ears open.

"He's a fraud, Laura—a base impostor."

It was the voice of Grace that came to the ears of the tramp, from an adjoining room.

"You have no right to say that, Grace," answered the gentle voice of Miss Ward. "He may have been in father's employ, as he says. Of course, I would not know if he had been."

"No, certainly not; but Charles would, for he has kept the books of the firm, and I mean to ask him if Hiram Stiles ever was in his employ. I shall send for him at once."

"Nonsense, Grace."

"No, it isn't. In these days one can't be too cautious. If this man is an impostor, brother Charles ought to know it. You know, it is barely possible that William Armor is an innocent man—"

"I am sure he is."

"And who knows but this tramp is a thief, and, mayhap, a murderer?"

Stiles listened intently, yet seemed deeply interested in discussing the bread and meat set before him, and thus he gave Mary no suspicion.

He heard Miss Stratton leave the room, and a minute later Laura entered the kitchen.

She glanced timidly toward the tall, ungainly man, with the black hair and sandy beard, and shuddered in spite of herself.

What a terrible-looking creature, she thought. Was it possible that her father had ever employed such a man? She could not believe it, and she began to entertain the opinion of Grace Stratton—that the fellow was a fraud.

Mary suddenly left the room, and Laura found herself alone with the hideous tramp.

He shoved back from the table, and rose to his feet. Laura would have fled had not a strange fascination held her steps.

"Miss Ward!"

The girl turned, and faced the tall tramp, her face actually blanching with terror. To her excited imagination it seemed that he was about to perpetrate some terrible deed, such as has rendered the name of tramp detested and feared throughout the land.

One step the man took toward Laura, and then Mary suddenly entered. If Stiles had thought of holding any conversation with the maiden, Mary's entrance had frustrated it.

He suddenly extended his hand with the words:

"Here's pay for the dinner, miss."

Laura felt a bit of paper thrust into her hand, and the tramp shuffled from the house.

The most astonished person present was Mary.

"Arrah! who the devil iver heard of a tramp payin' for his grub before? Me soul! but he wor the quarest chap Marry Byrne iver set eyes on, sure."

Laura retired quickly.

She would have returned the money

had not the tramp fled so precipitately. Hurrying to her own room, she sank into a seat and examined the money. A new surprise awaited her. It was not a bank-note, but a bit of paper, on which were scrawled the following words:

"Laura Ward, there's mystery all about us. William Armor may be a guilty man, but if so, others are equally guilty. Whatever you do, distrust Charles Stratton! Beware of him, for he is a traitor! ONE WHO KNOWS."

The note was short, and full of mystery to Laura.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WAS THERE POISON IN THE DRAUGHT?

Laura was somewhat startled at the import of the note left by old Hiram Stiles, the tramp.

"I will show this to Grace, and trust to her judgment regarding the matter." Thus reasoned the maiden.

She read the note of warning once more, and then for the first time its full meaning burst upon her brain.

"Distrust Charles Stratton!"

It was rather a startling proposition. Why should she distrust her deceased father's partner? Surely a man whom her father trusted so implicitly could not be bad. Doubtless some one was meddling who had no right to interfere.

Who was this professed tramp, Stiles? Simply the bearer of this strange warning; but who had written the note?

Laura thought at length of Tom Tunnel, and concluded it was the noted detective who had sent the note, little suspecting that Tunnel was even then quite helpless in the old settler's cabin, two miles away.

On second thought, the maiden concluded to keep her own council, and not share her knowledge with the sister of the man against whom she had been warned.

It was late in the day, the one following the night when Tom Tunnel was left in an insensible condition at the house of Ben Arnold, that a horseman dashed up to the settler's cabin, and dismounting, hurriedly entered.

Mr. Arnold placed a chair for the newcomer, a young man with very dark face and heavy mustache.

"How is your patient?"

This was the first question propounded by the new-comer.

"Better, much better," answered Mr. Arnold. "Dr. Anderson promised to send over some medicine—"

"Exactly," uttered the young man. "I am here—to bring the medicine. It is here—two powders, one to be given this evening at nine, and the other in the morning. If you have glasses and water handy I will prepare them."

The old man brought forth a tumbler and pitcher of water.

Pouring a little of the water into the glass, the young man emptied a white powder into it. This he stirred with a spoon, and it was quickly dissolved.

"The other you will fix for him in the morning—but, stay," as the old man reached out for the bit of folded paper containing the powder, "I will call myself in the morning, and bring around the medicine, or perhaps the doctor will order a different kind."

To Ben Arnold nothing could be more natural, and after once more telling the settler to be sure and give the medicine at the hour of nine, the doctor's messenger departed.

The old settler was called away just a moment later, and he went out, leaving the tumbler of medicine on the front-room table.

Just at dark, who should ride up to the front of the cabin but Edward Caro, Charles Stratton's confidential clerk. Dismounting from his horse, the clerk rapped at the door. Mrs. Arnold admitted him, and he at once asked to see Tom Tunnel.

How did he know that the detective was ill in the house of the Arnolds?

The reader will remember that the

man in mask had, after leaving the vicinity of the settler's cabin, gone to an interview with Mike Jones, and from the latter the clerk had learned all.

It was a startling surprise to Caro to know that the man he had assisted out of the world, as he supposed, by flinging him into the old well, had escaped from his tomb, and was likely to recover.

The man was not at all bad. The supposed death of the detective had preyed upon his mind not a little, and under the influence of the crime he became extremely nervous, and started at the smallest sound. It was with not a little satisfaction, then, that he heard of the detective's escape from the doom marked out for him by cruel assassins.

Caro did not believe the detective suspected his agency in the late attempt on his life, and thus believing, he went boldly in to see the strangely resurrected man.

To his surprise, he found Tom Tunnel sitting up on the side of the bed, with his feet resting on the floor. His head was bandaged, and but for this and a slight paleness, Caro would not have supposed the detective had passed four-and-twenty hours under ground, without food or drink.

Tom Tunnel looked at the young man sharply.

He recognized him at a glance.

"I came at request of Mr. Stratton, who wishes to know how you are progressing."

"The devil!"

Not a nice expression, yet it more fully conveyed the detective's feelings than any other that came to his mind, on the spur of the moment.

"You have had a tough time, they tell me?"

"Who tells you so? Confound the doctors, anyhow. I am sorry one was called in."

"I am glad to see you looking so well," pursued the confidential clerk, not once heeding the surly manner of the detective.

"You are glad?"

"I am, indeed."

"And your employer is no doubt glad to hear that I escaped the murderous clutches of his tools."

"Sir?"

The young man's countenance flushed under the words of Tom Tunnel. The detective was extremely irritable, as much on account of the fact that Stratton had so soon discovered his whereabouts after his escape from his living grave, as from physical weakness, and ill-feeling consequent thereto.

"I do not understand, sir," at length articulated Caro, looking away to avoid the glittering orbs of the detective. "My employer is certainly one of your best friends. He was terribly shocked when he heard of your bad usage, and he has the police on the track of the rascals who attempted your murder."

"Taffy!" sneered Tom Tunnel.

"It is a fact."

Then, of a sudden, the detective seemed to remember that his present course was not one that was best to pursue under the circumstances, and he suddenly changed his tactics, and regarded the clerk with a smile.

"Very well. Give my respects to Charles Stratton, and tell him that I shall soon be able to look after the scoundrels who assaulted me myself. If I should need assistance, I will call on him in a day or two."

"Yes, I will tell him."

A little while longer Edward Caro remained, until he satisfied himself that Tom Tunnel had no knowledge of the part he had taken in the work of two nights before, and then he rose to go.

"The sandy-visaged hypocrite," muttered Tom Tunnel, as the door closed on the retreating form of Edward Caro.

Thus it will be seen that the detective was in no way deceived by the message sent by Mr. Stratton. In fact, Tom Tunnel suspected Charles Stratton of being a

vile wretch at heart, one who was none too good to perpetrate the worst of crimes.

As Edward Caro passed into the front room, he noticed a bucket of water standing near, with a tumbler on the table one-third full.

Feeling thirsty, he seized the tumbler and swallowed its contents at a gulp.

The draught did not seem to slake his thirst, but added to it instead. His throat seemed on fire. He grew dizzy, and a terrible weakness came over him with lightning rapidity.

"My soul! what is this?" gasped the trembling man. "I never felt in such distress before—never!"

He clutched at his stomach, and reeled to the sink, in which stood a bucket nearly full of fresh spring water.

"Water! Oh, my soul, I am burning up!"

The blaze of the hand-lamp that stood near, seemed to mock the man in his awful agony.

Seizing the bucket, Caro drank great draughts of the cooling beverage, but even this seemed not to slake the horrible thirst that had so suddenly seized upon him.

"My God, I am dying!"

Back across the cabin floor reeled the man, swinging his arms, and striving desperately to still the awful convulsions that wrenched his frame and seemed tearing him into ribbons.

"Oh, Heaven! what is this? Mercy! Help—help!"

Then, with a crash, Edward Caro, went to the floor, where he writhed and twisted about in most horrible agony.

Foam frothed his lips, his eyes bulged from their sockets, and the man's screams were frightful in the extreme.

Tom Tunnel was not a little startled at the sounds coming from the adjoining room, and he managed to spring up and open the door, just as Mr. Arnold and his good wife entered from the outside.

A horrible sight met the gaze of all.

Frothing at the mouth, shrieking and moaning, Caro thrashed about the floor. Every moment he became weaker, however, and soon his struggles were over, and the confidential clerk of Charles Stratton lay rigid in death on the floor of the old settler's house.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FRIENDS IN SHACKLES.

"Great guns! the man is dead!" exclaimed the detective, as he clutched the door and gazed at the face of the corpse.

For some moments the old settler and his wife said not a word, but glared in fixed horror upon the glazed eyes and purple lips of the man on the floor.

"How did it happen?" questioned the detective at length.

"I don't know. I was outside when the young fellow came," said Ben Arnold. "Wife came to the stable and told me that a stranger was in the house, and I came at once, to find him as you see. It is Mr. Stratton's clerk."

"Yes."

Just then the clatter of hoofs was heard, and the sound came to a pause at the settler's gate.

"Who comes now?"

"We shall soon see," uttered Mr. Arnold.

A hurried step came up the walk, and when the settler opened the door he was surprised to meet Dr. Anderson face to face.

The doctor was astounded at the sight that met his gaze, and listened to the particulars with a queer look on his face.

While talking Arnold glanced toward the table, and then he uttered a low exclamation and sprang quickly forward.

He had noticed the empty tumbler, and remembered the fact of his leaving it there with the medicine some time before.

Holding up the empty tumbler, the old man cried:

"It must be that Arnold drank this."

"What was it?"

"The medicine you sent, doctor."

"I sent?"

"Yes, this afternoon, by the young man, to be given at nine to-night, to Mr. Tunnel."

The doctor looked a little incredulous. "I sent no medicine," he said. "There is certainly some mistake here."

"Sent no medicine!" cried Ben Arnold. "Who then was the young chap who came and prepared this?"

"I know not."

The look of incredulity still rested on the face of Dr. Anderson.

"Good heavens! this is strange," murmured the white-haired old man. "A young fellow came here just before night and said he came from Dr. Anderson. He called for water and a tumbler, into which he put a white powder, telling me to give it to my patient at nine to-night."

"Indeed!"

The doctor took the glass from the hand of Mr. Arnold.

Thrusting it under his thin nose, he sniffed a moment; then a very grave look came to his face.

"Well?" questioned the detective.

"Poison!" uttered the doctor.

"I thought so," muttered Tom Tunnel.

The detective could readily understand how this attempt had been made to poison him. The conspirator had learned of his escape from the well, and at once concocted another scheme for his removal. And this had most signally failed. The wrong man had become the victim.

Dr. Anderson examined the corpse, and soon satisfied himself that a deadly poison had done its work. When he rose from the examination he looked very grave, and turned to Tom Tunnel.

"This is a terrible affair, Mr. Tunnel."

"It is indeed," admitted the detective.

"Murder has been done!" said the doctor, in a hollow voice.

"I am not sure of that," said Tom Tunnel.

"The corpse and the poison attest it," was the doctor's grim reply.

"It attests one thing, doctor."

"Well?"

"The wrong man took the poison."

"How is that?"

"The fatal dose was prepared for me."

"Do you believe that?"

"Didn't you hear what Mr. Arnold says?"

"Yes. Did you see or hear this young man who brought the medicine?"

"No."

"I thought not. Had such a man been here you would have been likely to have heard his voice, if you had not seen him."

Dr. Anderson glanced at Ben Arnold as he spoke.

Tunnel understood at once where the doctor's suspicions lay, and in his inmost soul he believed them to be unfounded.

The detective, however, said nothing then.

"The coroner will sit on the case," said the doctor. "You will see that no one disturbs the body?"

"Trust me for that," answered Tunnel, who was feeling unusually strong, and anxious to be on the trail once more.

In a little time the doctor departed, cautioning the old people not to interfere with the body of Caro until the arrival of the coroner.

Mrs. Arnold, whose nerves were terribly unstrung, retired to her own room, but Ben remained with Tunnel.

"I cannot understand this horrible affair at all," declared the old man. "Who was the young fellow who brought that poison? and what object—"

"His object," interrupted the detective, with a smile, "was to murder me."

"You astound me."

"Well, detectives are obnoxious to some people," continued Tom, "and when my enemies found that a slung shot and dry well could not silence me, they resorted to poison."

"Horrible!" ejaculated the old man. "Who are these wicked men?"

"Just at present I am not prepared to say," answered the detective; "but you

may rest assured of one thing, when the scoundrels who are seeking my life so fiercely are brought up with a round turn, the assassin of Harry Ward will be among them."

"Is it possible?"

"I shall soon be able to make my words good."

Two hours passed; then the rattle of wheels announced the arrival of visitors. In the Northwest everything is done in a hurry.

A wagon-load of people had come from the city to view the body of the dead clerk, foremost among whom was Charles Stratton, the millionaire miner.

He seemed to be greatly moved when he gazed into the face of the dead.

A pair of keen eyes were watching him closely meantime—the eyes of Detective Tunnel.

From the visitors the coroner summoned a jury, and the case was adjudicated then and there.

Strong suspicion rested against the Arnolds, and to the unbounded astonishment of Tom Tunnel a verdict was rendered to the effect that Edward Caro came to his death from poison administered by the hand of Ben Arnold.

An indignant glow came to the cheek of the old man.

"Never mind," whispered Tom Tunnel; "this farce won't hurt you any, and soon it shall rebound against the concoctors of an infamous plot."

"It'll kill mother," moaned the old pioneer.

"She can keep you company—"

"Do your duty, Gallagher."

The detective's speech was cut short at these words from Charles Stratton.

The constable who accompanied the party at once advanced to the side of Mr. Arnold, and said:

"You are my prisoner, old man!"

The next instant a pair of handcuffs were snapped over his wrists.

Mrs. Arnold, trembling and weeping, was treated in the same manner, and both were hurried out into the night.

"A disgraceful farce!" sneered the detective, as he looked upon the scene.

Once more Tom Tunnel and Charles Stratton stood face to face.

"I understand that you are ailing, Mr. Tunnel, and, as this place will now be deserted, I offer you a place in my carriage. You are welcome to a place in my home, also, until you thoroughly recover."

Tom gazed sharply into the mild blue eyes of the speaker. He seemed quite in earnest in his proposition.

"I accept your offer, Mr. Stratton."

The body of the dead clerk was removed to the Ward mansion, where it was prepared for burial the following day.

Tunnel was only too glad of an excuse to enter the Ward mansion, and he pretended a weakness he did not feel in order to prolong his stay.

The eyes and thoughts of the detective were fixed upon Stratton, for he was coming to believe that the mine-owner was at the bottom of all the villainy of the past few weeks, and he resolved to watch him closely.

For a week Tunnel was an inmate of the Ward house, during which time he made no discoveries whatever.

Laura and Miss Stratton treated him with respect, and both assured him that they could not believe Ben Arnold and his wife guilty of a murder that could in no way benefit either.

Who, then, was the man who had left the poisoned draught at the settler's house?

This question was one that puzzled all who knew aught of the strange circumstances. Of Laura the detective made a partial confidant, and together they discussed the situation, fully concluding that the one who had attempted the life of the detective at the boat was in the employ of the men who hurled him into the old well.

At the end of a week, Tom Tunnel concluded that he was strong enough to

shift for himself, and so left the Ward mansion, to once more assume the trail.

On the eve of his departure he had a short interview with Mr. Stratton. He found that gentleman unusually pleasant and sociable.

"As I told you once before, you have my best wishes for your success," averred the mine-owner, "but I am now fully persuaded that William Armor is the man you should seek, and not waste your time looking elsewhere."

"Perhaps you are right," answered Tunnel, as he departed.

CHAPTER XXV.

A STARTLING ACCUSATION.

One of the first moves made by Tom Tunnel was to visit old Mr. Arnold in prison.

He found the old man in low spirits, and attempted to cheer him up.

"No use, Mr. Tunnel," said the old man. "I cannot stand this long. Mother is sick—her heart is quite broken to think we should be arrested for such a horrible crime, and she won't last long."

"I'll see about that," returned the detective. "Knowing as I do that you are as innocent as a new-born babe, it quite stirs me up to see you used in this manner, at the instance of Charles Stratton."

"Ah! then he was the man who caused our arrest?"

"He was; and he shall be made to withdraw his charge, or I'll make trouble."

A faint smile touched the face of the old man.

"You're a good friend to me."

"I am a friend to all innocent men who are persecuted."

For an hour the detective remained with the old man, and when he left the jail, a smile played about the corners of his mouth.

That day, while Mr. Stratton sat in his down-town office, a boy entered and handed him a note, then glided out without a word.

Opening it, the mine-owner was not a little surprised at its contents.

"Mr. Stratton: Mr. and Mrs. Arnold, estimable old people, are in jail, and suffering severely on a charge that you must know cannot be made to stick. It is for your interest that they be released at once. I hope you will use your influence toward that end. A word to the wise is sufficient. N."

"Who the devil is N?" growled the mine-owner, when he read the note. "I can't imagine, and I will show the note to Grace. Perhaps she can tell."

But Miss Stratton was as much in the dark as was her brother, when he spoke to her on the subject that evening.

"I am of the opinion, however, that the writer is not far out of the way."

It was Grace who said this.

"You don't imagine the Arnolds guilty?"

"Of course not."

"Nor I."

"Then why persecute them?"

"You must know that it was through your advice that I did so."

"I was terribly aroused when I heard of Caro's death," said Miss Stratton, "and wished somebody punished for the crime. I think the mystery of the murder has not been solved."

"My opinion exactly."

"Do you believe the story told by Mr. Arnold?" questioned Grace, after a brief pause.

"I did not at the outset, but I am inclined that way now."

"So am I," admitted Grace.

"Who was the man who pretended to come from Dr. Anderson?"

"I cannot tell, of course, but I have an idea."

"Well?"

"The story Mr. Arnold tells is true, and the young man who visited the settler's house and left the poison really came from Dr. Anderson."

"You surprise me."

"I am convinced, on reflection, that such is the case."

"But why should the doctor wish to poison Tom Tunnel?"

"He did not."

"What then?"

"It was a mistake. The doctor sent the wrong medicine, and when he discovered its fatal results, to screen himself, he at once denied sending the drug."

"And the messenger?"

"Horried at what he had lent himself to, unintentionally, he had made himself scarce. To me, now, the whole terrible affair is plain enough."

The reasoning of his sister was indeed plausible, and Charles Stratton at once fell in with it.

"In that case," he said, "it is positively wicked to hold those old people in prison on this charge."

"It certainly is."

"I will do what I can to get them out of jail."

"That is like you, my good brother; and I am sure that Laura will be pleased to have you take such a course."

"She has acted very strangely of late. I am certainly not making rapid progress in my wooing," uttered Stratton. "She cannot get over thinking of that rascally young Detroit. There is proof enough against him to send him to Jackson, if we could only secure the fellow."

"True," admitted Grace. "While he is free, bidding defiance to law, Laura will regard him as a sort of persecuted hero, but once let the verdict of murder be pronounced against him, and she will give up the idea at once. Have you heard nothing regarding the fellow since his visit to the grounds that night?"

"Absolutely nothing."

"Officers are still looking for him?"

"Yes, some of the sharpest detectives in the city."

"He cannot long remain free."

"It doesn't seem possible."

"About Tom Tunnel? He does not believe in William Armor's guilt?"

"I think not."

"He might have captured Will before now."

"I am of that opinion."

A brief silence followed, and then Miss Stratton said:

"A peculiar thing happened not long ago of which I meant to speak before now."

Then she related the incident of the tramp's visit to the house.

"On the day after his departure I found this."

Grace placed a bit of crumpled paper in the hand of her brother.

He opened and read.

The contents of the note brought a frown to his usually serene brow.

It was the note placed in Laura's hand by Hiram Stiles on the occasion of his visit some days before.

"Grace, what does this mean?"

"You know as well as I."

"Where did you find it?"

"On the stairs, the morning following the tramp's call."

"Do you connect him in any way with the authorship?"

"I have not thought on it. My opinion is that Tom Tunnel wrote the note."

"Why should he?"

"I am unable to tell, of course; but I more than half suspect that Tunnel is working in the interest of William Armor for a purpose; what it is, of course, I cannot imagine."

"It's a confoundedly mixed mess, anyhow," growled the mine-owner.

"Indeed it is."

"I shall bend my energies to one thing now," declared Stratton, suddenly.

"And that?"

"The finding of William Armor. Tomorrow's Herald will contain an ad. offering ten thousand dollars reward for the fellow. I can't rest while he is at large."

"You should have done this sooner," asserted Grace, "and thus convinced people of your earnest wish to punish the slayer of your partner. People have talked."

"In what way?"

"It has been said that Charles Stratton thinks more of the money he gained by the death of his partner than he does of hunting down his assassin."

For an instant a gleam of fire shot into the blue eyes of the mine-owner.

"I'll show them!"

And he rushed from the room.

He carried with him the note that Laura had lost on the morning after it was delivered by the tramp.

Stratton's brain seemed on fire, as he strode down the walk in the darkness, and paused at the front gate.

"People are talking, eh?" he grated. "I'll silence their prating, or know the reason why."

"Will you, old man?"

The mine-owner whirled at the sound of a voice near, but saw no one.

"Who speaks?" he demanded, sharply.

For some moments not a sound.

Then Stratton felt a breath on his cheek, and low words were uttered in his ear.

"Mr. Stratton, the bloody deed will not avail. I see a gallows, and a man with a noose about his neck; he is to die for the murder of Harry Ward. The murderer is not William Armor, but Charles Stratton! and Satan will soon claim his own!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

NOT SAFE YET.

The mine-owner reeled backward at the words, and clutched at the air.

Finally he secured a firm hold of the gate with one hand, and then glared about him, his free hand falling to the butt of a revolver.

"Man, where are you?" he demanded finally, in a husky voice, that seemed to vibrate with some terrible emotion, either terror or rage, perhaps both.

No answer came.

"By the powers! who was it spoke? I'd like to get my clutches on you once."

"Go slow, old man!"

A hand fell on the mine-owner's arm, holding back his pistol, while a single eye glared fixedly into his face.

"Unhand me, scoundrel!" and Stratton attempted to tear himself loose, but failed.

"I've got you, traitor!" hissed the stranger. "The law will have you soon! until that time, good-by."

Stratton felt himself released, and the next instant he saw a dark form moving away in the darkness.

At once he leveled his pistol and fired.

Twice the sharp report of his revolver, but nothing came of it. The stranger had made good his escape.

The shots alarmed the inmates of the house, however, and Stratton hastened back to reassure them.

"I was assaulted by a tramp, or drunken rascal, and merely fired to frighten him. I was really in no danger during the time."

The mine-owner's explanation seemed to satisfy his sister and Laura, and the peace of the night was not again disturbed.

Nevertheless, Charles Stratton was deeply troubled.

The words of the stranger were ringing in his ears continually—"The murderer is Charles Stratton!"

"Confound it, I am getting nervous, I do believe!" growled the millionaire. "I have no reason to fear a man who is afraid to show himself, and unbosom himself in public."

A man stood on the lake shore, less than a mile from Marquette, glancing out upon the water.

A boat was rapidly approaching the spot where he stood, containing but a single occupant.

"He comes at last," muttered the man, as he glared, with a hunted look in his eyes, at the coming boat.

The sun was fast sinking, and it would soon be night—a fact that seemed to urge the boatman to greater speed.

In a little time the prow of the skiff

grounded on the sand, and a little old man sprang out.

He extended his hand quickly.

"I am glad to meet you, Will."

"And I am glad to see you once more, Tom Tunnel, though you choose to come in disguise."

It was really our old acquaintance, William Armor, who spoke, but he has changed not a little since he fled from the hands of justice weeks ago.

A stumpy beard now covers his cheeks, and the sunken black eyes seem to look out from hollow, cavernous depths with a restless glow that reminds one of a hunted animal.

"It is safer," assumed the detective, in answer to the words of the fugitive. "There are at least two persons in this region who would be glad to put me out of the world, and, as I am not yet ready to depart, I assume various disguises in order to deceive the prying eyes of my foes."

"That is well enough, I suppose," answered Will, "but how long is this to last? I am growing almost despairing."

"You need rest, that's a fact, and I mean to provide it for you."

"I am glad to hear you say so."

The detective turned to his boat, and lifted out a bundle.

"Here is a complete disguise for you. Once inside of that, and your own mother wouldn't know you."

Will undid the bundle, and while he was assuming the disguise they both talked.

"I have done something to repay your friends for their kindness, Will."

"What became of Ben Arnold and his wife?"

"Both are free, and back in the old house."

"I am glad to hear it."

"There was no evidence against them. On the examination they were set free, and Mr. Stratton apologized for the part he had taken."

"Indeed."

"Yes. He seemed quite sorry that he had been so hasty."

"The consummate actor."

"Ah, do you think so?"

"I will say this, Mr. Tunnel. Although Charles Stratton is but little known to me, I can say that I have been impressed with the belief that he is a villain. I may be wrong, but in all your proceedings don't for one moment lose sight of Stratton, and the part he may have had in that tragedy on the lake. You may think I am trying to turn suspicion from myself, but it is not so. Somebody is guilty of murder, and I believe Charles Stratton had as great a motive as I could have to get rid of his partner."

"Your reasoning is plausible."

"I am thankful for your friendly interest thus far," asserted Will, "and you must excuse me for requesting you to look sharp after Mr. Stratton."

"I am glad you are so free to speak, Will. I have an eye in that direction. You rescued me from the well, where my enemies cast me to die, and I shall forget the service very soon. It would grieve me to the heart to find you the guilty man at last."

"Don't flatter me, sir. You must not forget that I had help in rescuing you."

"Hiram Stiles," uttered the detective, "and the queerest chap in the lot."

"Yes—but I am ready, Tom."

"A perfect fit. Your own father wouldn't know you if he should meet you on the street."

"It is well. Where are we to go?"

"To a fisherman's hut on the coast a way. Before I get there I shall don my disguise, and present you as a friend of mine, rusticated, and especially desirous of cultivating the acquaintance of fish dealers. You understand?"

"Perfectly," and Will forced a laugh for the first time.

Although he was thinking deeply, most of the time of Laura, he never once mentioned her name.

"She will be true to me," he thought, "and I will not darken her young life."

nor make further trouble while this accusation hangs over me."

Soon after the departure of the two men in the boat, a man rose from behind a clump of bushes not twenty yards from the beach.

His eyes sparkled, and a pleased look pervaded his face.

He was of giant frame, and we have met him before.

It was Mike Jones, the Chicago Crook-Chief!

He rubbed his hands together and chuckled.

"Well, here's a fine go, and no mistake. The best lay I've struck in an age; a regular bonanza, I swear."

Then the villain approached the water, but was careful not to expose himself to the gaze of the occupants of the boat.

"I think I know the exact spot where Mr. William Armor will proceed to rusticate. Before the cock crows in the morning there'll be a surprised youngster on this coast, or my name's not what it is."

The crook turned his face toward Marquette, while our two friends proceeded up the lake.

It was to the cabin of the fisherman who had found the body of the murdered millionaire that Tom Tunnel proceeded, and he had no difficulty in inducing the two men to permit Mr. Lawrence to remain with them a few days, and revel in the cool breezes and generous fishing.

"Now, Will, when you hear from me again, I hope it will be to proclaim you a free man, and that you will have the right and happiness to rejoice with me over the arrest of the right man."

"I hope so, God knows."

Will's first night in the shanty was a pleasant one.

It was after midnight when he retired to rest. The morning's awakening was, however, an unpleasant surprise.

One of the fishermen peered in at the door, and said:

"I guess the hull o' Marquette's come, Mr. Lawrence."

The young man sprang to his feet and went to the open door. One glance outside was enough to give him a nervous shock.

Half a dozen men had landed from boats, and they were approaching the shanty, with Constable Gallagher at their head!

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN TERROR OF THE MOB.

Will was possessed of a revolver, but he had no desire to injure the men, who were simply doing their duty under the law. He was in disguise, too, and it was possible that he would not be recognized. He did not know that he had been identified by the Chicago Crook—that Constable Gallagher had been given a description of the character Will had assumed.

The young Detroitier stood boldly in the door, and faced the constable and his posse.

"Hello!" exclaimed Will. "Fish will be in good demand to-day, I reckon."

"We're not after fish," said Gallagher, as he confronted Will.

"Eh? Well, maybe you've come up for a little pleasure trip, as I have."

"That's it exactly, Mr.—"

"Lawrence," said Will.

"Lawrence be blowed! William Armor, the game's up. You must go with us."

Instantly the constable covered the fugitive with his revolver, and five others who suddenly presented from the gentlemen who accompanied the officer.

The youth forced a smile.

It was a sickly attempt at pleasantry, however.

"There is some mistake, gentlemen," declared Will, desperately. "My name is Lawrence, and I am from Detroit."

"Well, Mr. Lawrence, you must go with us, all the same," returned the constable, displaying a pair of handcuffs.

There was no help for it.

Will realized that he had run the race

to the end, and that prison walls were soon to close about him, perhaps forever. It was a terrible thought.

A moment only of hesitation, and then the hunted felon resigned himself to his fate without a struggle.

Handcuffs were snapped over his wrists; his pockets were searched, and all weapons taken from them.

A hand went up and suddenly snatched the wig from the fugitive's head, and William Armor stood revealed.

"A clever trick," muttered Gallagher, "but it couldn't work with me. I was too sharp for you this time."

"I don't think I owe my capture to your sharpness," said Will. "I have been betrayed."

"Who by?"

But Will noted the eager look in the man's eyes, and he was wise enough not to speak Tom Tunnel's name just then.

"That's more than I can tell," he said. "Some one of my numerous friends has gone back on me, that's all."

"Which one?"

"I can't tell."

Nothing could be wormed out of Will now.

He was on his guard, and would mention no names at present. Tom Tunnel may have betrayed him; in fact, it looked that way now, but the young Detroitier was determined to keep his own counsel until matters assumed a more definite shape.

Back to the boats went the posse, with Will in irons, between Gallagher and a companion.

The two fishermen were wonder-struck.

"Jewhiz, Pat! wot's the meaning of this 'ere, say?"

"Dum'd ef I know."

"Mr. Lawrence's got into trouble."

"It looks that way, for a fact."

"What'll we do about it?"

"Nothing."

"That's consol'n'," grunted the other. "We'll lose the five dollars a week Lawrence was to pay us for board."

"Dum shame."

Thus the two fishermen stood cursing their luck, and wondering what had caused the trouble, little thinking that a thousand dollars had been permitted to slip through their fingers without their knowing it.

The men with their prisoner were not long in reaching Marquette, when Gallagher conveyed his prisoner to jail at once for safe-keeping.

Just at noon, as Tom Tunnel, in the disguise of a miner, was passing down the main street, he was suddenly attracted by the sound of a voice crying:

"'Ere's yer extra Blower! All about the capture of the murderer, William Armor!"

Boys were selling the extra sheet.

The detective could not believe the purport of the newsboys' cry, but he squandered two cents for a copy of the paper, and was astounded to read:

"The Murderer Captured!—William Armor, the man who assassinated our fellow-citizen, Harry Ward, captured, after a desperate resistance."

Then followed a glowing and overdrawn account of the seizure of Will at the shanty of the two fishermen. Officer Gallagher was eulogized as a hero, and beslobbered with praise for his untiring devotion to the case and great courage, that, to a man like Tom Tunnel, was sickening in the extreme. The detective was quite indignant before he finished the newspaper article, which was inflammatory to the last degree.

The insecurity of life in the mining country was dwelt upon at length, and the uncertainty of justice being meted out to law-breakers. Then followed a bit of hypocritical pleading that would have done credit to a shyster of the lowest degree.

"Few murderers have been punished in this region," the editor concluded, "and it does look as though it was about time the people took this matter of administering justice to criminals into

their own hands. Far be it from us to insinuate that this last most vile criminal will stand no show of getting his just deserts before the courts, but if he is treated as others have been heretofore, he will go unscathed, and the generous and foully slain Mr. Ward will sleep in his bloody shroud unavenged."

Nothing could be better calculated to stir up the blood of citizens, especially those who are ever ready, when excuse offers, to start a mob.

The paper, with its inflammatory article, was being spread broadcast through the town, through saloons, among workmen, as well as among the better class of people.

Knots of citizens gathered on the corners and discussed the subject.

Great excitement soon prevailed.

Tom Tunnel realized that trouble was brewing, and he resolved at once to do what he could to prevent a tragedy.

The detective was a man who took pride in his profession, and could find no justification in the committal of a second murder in order to avenge a first.

If Will fell into the hands of the mob, an innocent man would perish. Tom Tunnel had full faith to believe this, and he was deeply anxious on his account.

The newspaper article was getting in its work, and soon an angry mob would be thundering at the door of the jail, demanding the prisoner.

Once turned over to the maddened mob, and Will's fate was sealed.

To avert the catastrophe that threatened, Tom Tunnel repaired at once to the marshal's office, and laid the facts before him, at the same time revealing himself in his true character.

"I have been searching out this murder mystery, and I know William Armor is innocent, but of course that does not matter just now. In any event, the prisoner should be protected from the mob."

"Of course," admitted the marshal; "but there isn't the least danger; the people of Marquette are law-abiding citizens."

"Ordinarily, but you'll soon see a howling mob in these streets. Your newspaper has lit the match."

"Well, I'll see."

"You must act at once, if at all."

"I know my duty, Mr. Tunnel."

"I hope so, but I fear you are not ready to perform it."

"There is the door!"

The marshal's face was flushed with anger, if with nothing stronger, as he pointed to the opening left by the carpenter.

"William Armor's blood will be on your head, Mr. Smith—"

"Go!" thundered the pompous official, trembling with rage.

The detective shot from the room.

"The old fool!" he muttered, when he gained the street. "Nothing can be gained from him."

Just then a loud shout was borne to the ears of Tom Tunnel.

The mob was gathering!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

VANISHED!

The Marquette jail, in which the prisoner was confined, was a weak affair, not calculated to withstand an assault.

Tom Tunnel made his way at once to the building used as a jail.

He met the jailer, who had heard the shouts of angry people in the distance, and wondered at it.

"A mob is coming," said the detective. "This way?"

"Yes, and they are seeking the man left in your charge to-day. You should summon men to guard the jail at once."

The jailer was a determined man, and he at once proceeded to act upon the suggestion made by Tunnel.

"It would be a good plan to remove the prisoner before the mob arrives," said Tunnel. "The train will go out soon, and if Armor could be taken to sleeping he would undoubtedly escape the hand of lynchers."

After offering these suggestions, Tom Tunnel stepped upon the street.

The angry crowd was close at hand now, and as if wishing to defeat the very object for which they were organized, the lynchers rent the air with their shouts, thus giving the officers ample time to make ready to receive them.

The mob was badly managed, and poor whisky circulated freely.

This had the effect to make the men noisy.

As the detective stood upon the street a tall man, wearing a broad-brimmed hat, stepped from one corner of the jail, and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Who sent you to interfere?" demanded this man, in a low, sharp tone.

"No one."

"Then why didn't you permit the boys to have the murderer? He deserves death."

"I do not agree with you."

"Are you, then, in league with the assassin?"

Tom Tunnel glanced sharply into the face of the speaker.

For some moments the two glared into each other's eyes without speaking or moving.

Those eyes? Where had he seen them before?

The cunning eyes of the serpent. Like a flash came a revelation to the brain of the detective. First on board the Lake Queen had he met the glow of those eyes.

With the quickness of a flash he laid his hand on the man's arm, and thrust a revolver into his face.

"You are my prisoner, Mike Jones!"

The words came in a low, stern tone from the lips of the detective.

"I guess not."

Tom Tunnel was a quick man, but he then witnessed the quickest move of his life. The big man, who was really the Chicago crook, had suspected the identity of Tunnel, and was ready to move at an instant's notice.

One hand seized the detective's wrist, while the other grasped his throat. Tunnel's pistol exploded, but the bullet was flattened against a brick wall, without doing any damage.

The two men were clinched in a desperate struggle for the mastery.

The detective was a third smaller than his antagonist, but he made up in agility what he lacked in size.

Back and forth the two men reeled.

"Bring out the murderer!"

"Fetch him out, or down comes yer chance!"

The yells of the mob now broke distinctly on the ears of the struggling men. Of the two, Mike Jones was the most alarmed. It would not do to be found here when the mad mob arrived.

With a mighty effort Jones attempted to tear himself loose from the clutches of the detective.

"Let go, or I'll put a knife into you!" growled the huge villain, hoarsely.

"No, you don't, scoundrel! You're the very man I want, and I'm going to keep you. You go back to Chicago with me, old chap," grated Tom Tunnel.

There was no mistaking the identity of the man now. The detective had torn off a wig from the head and face of the crook, and he stood revealed in his true character before Tom Tunnel.

"Hades!"

The struggles of Jones were like those of a maniac.

In the midst of it, a missile came hissing through the air, a brick hurled by one of the mob, which put an end to the struggle most suddenly, since it struck the detective's arm, and swept it, benumbed and bleeding, to his side.

"Ha! Good-by, old boy!"

Mike Jones tore himself loose then, and darted away.

Tom Tunnel would have followed, but the yells of the mob warned him that a terrible danger threatened his friend Will, and he could not risk anything by leaving the vicinity of the jail at that time.

Bricks and stones were flying freely now.

The detective's right arm was bruised and numb, yet not wholly useless. He managed to snatch his revolver from the ground, and, facing the men who came swarming down the narrow street leading to the jail, he thrust forward his pistol, and in a stentorian voice shouted: "Halt!"

Instinctively the rabble came to a stand before one determined man and his revolver.

"Who the devil be you?"

"I am here to defend the jail."

A derisive laugh followed the words of the detective.

"A putty specimen you be," yelled one of the crowd. "Jest step aside, if you don't want your skull cracked."

"Back!" thundered Tom Tunnel, as the mob once more surged forward.

Mobs are proverbially cowardly. This one was no exception to the rule, and the cocked revolver of Tom Tunnel kept them at bay for some time.

Those in the rear were clamorous for the murderer, however, and surged forward, pressing the front ranks upon the detective, in spite of themselves.

"The keys! bring out the keys!"

"Smash the door down!"

Such shouts filled the air.

Where was the jailer, who had gone to get help to defend the jail?

He had certainly failed to find the necessary help.

His wife, however, appeared at the door with the keys in hand, and she reluctantly turned them over to one of the ringleaders of the mob. The poor woman was nearly frightened out of her wits.

Tom Tunnel saw that all effort on his part would avail nothing. He turned upon the jailer's wife with a word of rebuke.

"You ought not to have given up the keys."

"I—I know; but I couldn't help it. They would have murdered me if I hadn't."

"I do not think so. Where has your husband gone?"

"After help."

"It is too late now, I fear."

"Are you the detective who was talking with Dick a little bit ago?" questioned the woman.

Tom Tunnel acknowledged he was the same man.

"Then I will tell you. They won't find Armor."

"Ah!"

"He is not now in the jail."

Even as the woman spoke, a yell of rage issued from the innermost corridor of the building.

Without asking any questions, Tom Tunnel at once wormed his way into the building. There were several other prisoners in the building who were not interfered with by the mob, which had been informed as to the personal appearance of the man they wanted.

On opening his cell William Armor was not to be found.

Other cells were opened—the jail, in fact, thoroughly scoured—but no William Armor was to be found.

Tom Tunnel believed he understood the situation. During the excitement in front of the jail the prisoner had been quietly spirited away through a rear entrance.

"The jailer was not so slow after all," mused Tom Tunnel. "It was much better to proceed in this quiet manner than to make resistance, and shoot down half a dozen of the rioters, although I should feel tempted to try the latter means of dealing with them, anyhow."

The mob vented their disappointment in a way that was certainly not incredible.

Every prisoner in the jail was turned loose, and considerable damage was inflicted upon the building, ere the mob gave over their demonstrations of disapproval at the escape of the man they wanted for a victim.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BIG CROOK SCENTS DANGER.

The mob dispersed after a time.

When nearly all the yelling horde had disappeared, the jailer put in an appearance.

The detective was in the house when the jailer came.

"I saw it was too late, so I had to let the prisoner slide," said Dick Martin, the jail-keeper.

"A good thing. I congratulate you on your sharpness," and Tom Tunnel gave the man's hand a warm shake.

"I don't understand you. They will hang the prisoner."

"Who will?"

"The mob."

"But they didn't get him. Your little game worked in good time. It was neatly done, Mr. Martin."

"What in the nation are you talking about?"

The jailer seemed bewildered.

His wife came to the rescue.

"Our lost prisoner escaped with the man you sent for him, through the back way, long before the mob entered the jail," she said.

"I sent nobody here."

It was Mrs. Martin's turn to look surprised.

"Who, then, was the stout man, with side whiskers and blue goggles, who came for the key to the back door, and said you sent him? Here, look at that," and the woman thrust a paper into the hand of her liege lord.

This is what he read:

"Mrs. Martin: The bearer of this is an officer and my friend. Turn over the keys to him at once. He will save William Armor from the mob. I will explain all when I see you. DICK."

"The devil!"

The exclamation fell harshly from the lips of Martin.

"Did you not send the note, dear?"

"No. You're an idiot, Maggie!"

Nothing was more certain than that Mr. Dick Martin was angry.

Tom Tunnel was permitted to read the note.

He imagined he could see through the whole affair, for he was pretty well assured ere this that he was not the only detective in the mining region.

Who could have been the man who had so neatly hoodwinked the jailer's wife?

Might it not be Hiram Stiles?

His name was the first to occur to Tom Tunnel.

The jailer was so enraged he set down and grated his teeth, not thinking to give the alarm and set officers on the track of the escaped prisoner.

"Can you describe the man, Mrs. Martin?"

This question came from Tom Tunnel.

"He was large, very portly, with long side whiskers and blue goggles. I thought him some city official, for he was well dressed and smooth spoken."

"Exactly," growled the jailer. "This is a pretty mess, I must say. Maggie, you're a confounded idiot!"

Tom Tunnel was wise enough not to interfere between man and wife. He had learned wisdom from bitter experience, and, without offering further suggestions, he left the house.

"So Will is once more out of the clutches of the law," muttered Tom Tunnel, as he hurried away.

"Well, it will be a miracle if he is not captured before he goes far. I can't say that I am sorry Will has escaped. I must secure the arrest of Jones once, and then I can work to better advantage against the rest of the conspirators."

The news of the prisoner's escape spread throughout the city, and telegrams were sent out once more, warning people to look out for the fugitive law. But they did not find him.

The name of William Armor was more detested than ever, and most people were free to express their

the mob failed of their grand when they raided the jail.

Of course, the jailer came in for a good bit of abuse.

The next issue of the *Blower* berated him as an imbecile, unfit to hold the office of dog-whipper.

The smut machine was again at work. It was night once more, the evening after the morning of William Armor's escape from Marquette jail.

Within a small room that was in the corner of a basement, sat two men at a small table. Between them sat a lamp and a bottle of wine. We have met these men before.

Mike Jones and Jim, the man in mask.

"No use talking," said the crook, emphasizing his words with an emphatic thump of his fist on the table, "I'm not going to remain longer in this region. It's getting mighty hot, I tell you. There's more'n one detective on the trail. Tom Tunnel's bad enough, but he's a baby beside the other."

"Do you know this other one?"

"Not positively. I suspect, though."

"Well?"

"One of Pinkerton's best man-hunters."

"Impossible."

Nevertheless the man in mask gave a visible start.

"No, it's more'n probable."

"On what lay is the fellow? Surely he cannot suspect anything wrong—that is—"

"Look here," interrupted the big crook, leaning forward and tapping the mask on the arm with one white forefinger. "When one of them fellows is around, it's safe to say he's liable to suspect a heap. Things are going to be hot here before long."

The evil eyes of the speaker were fixed in an intense glow on the face of Jim.

He saw the masked villain tremble, and at that moment the crook would have given his best hat to have looked behind that mask. In all his dealings with the man calling himself Jim, Mike Jones had never looked behind his face-covering.

If the gambler suspected who the person was with whom he had to deal, he never let those suspicions be known.

The death of Caro had brought these two more frequently together, since the former had, in times gone by, acted as a bearer of communications between the two.

"No use repeating those words," answered Jim. "I am well satisfied with the situation of affairs, and if you will remain but a short time longer, everything will be fixed satisfactorily."

"I must go back to Chicago."

"Nonsense."

"No, it isn't. I'm safer in that town than here, and I have rendered all the service possible."

"You have not."

"How can I be of more service?"

"I want you to remain until William Armor is behind the prison bars at Jackson."

"He will never go there."

"Why not?"

"Because," and the voice of Jones sounded hoarse and unnatural as he spoke, "because there's one on the trail who will trace this whole matter to the bottom, and I mean to get from under while there's yet time. My advice to you is to pack your grip also, and travel to the mountains for your health."

The earnestness of the gambler-crook seemed to render his companion nervous in the extreme.

"You surprise me, Mike. I always counted you a brave man. What has come over you?" cried Jim, in a tone of remonstrance.

"I know enough to quit a losing game when I see all the cards stacked on me. From now on it will be worse than useless to continue the fight."

"Give your reasons."

"William Armor has escaped."

"True; but—"

"Wait and hear me out. William Armor escaped right in the teeth of a mob, and I know that his escape was connived at by some one in authority. Who that some one is I cannot say for a certainty, but I believe it was engineered by one of Pinkerton's detectives."

"That is an extravagant story, sir."

"Not at all, as you will soon discover. The time for proving William Armor a murderer has gone by; but the time for securing one to take the place lately assigned to him is not far distant."

"Mike Jones, I am astonished!"

"Perhaps; it's best to be honest, you know."

He emitted a laugh that was somewhat satirical.

"Man, what have you discovered?" cried Jim, in an unsteady voice.

"A good deal. The murderer of Harry Ward will soon be arrested, and it will not be William Armor!"

CHAPTER XXX.

MIKE JONES HOLDS A FULL HAND.

The man in mask started and trembled at this last announcement of the Chicago Crook-Chief.

His hands moved about nervously, and at length one fell to his hip.

A sneering smile touched the face of Mike Jones.

"I'm too old a bird to be frightened, Jim," he said with a growl.

"This is not the first time you have played off on me," uttered the mask, angrily. "I think I have not been misinformed regarding your character. You would sell out your best friend for a consideration. In whose employ are you now, Mike Jones?"

The big man growled.

"It hits home, I see. You have sold out to the detectives, scoundrel!"

With these words a pistol gleamed above the table, and had not the hand of Jones moved with the quickness of a flash he would have died then and there.

A bright flash, followed by a sharp report, filled the cellar, but the hand of Jim had been turned aside, and the giant succeeded in tearing the revolver from the clutch of the would-be assassin.

"Infamous scoundrel!"

"Calmly, calmly, my dear Jim," cried Jones, throwing his arms about the mask, and holding him as in a vise.

"Now, then, my man, cool off a bit," growled the stout crook. "I don't mean to permit myself made a sieve of to please even you."

For an instant the masked villain struggled, and then he became still, forcing a laugh to his lips.

"Let me go, Mike; it was all a joke."

"A mighty dear joke it'll be, if you ever attempt anything of the kind again," growled Jones.

He released Jim, but appropriated his revolver to his own use.

The eyes of the mask were cast wistfully at the revolver, but he made no attempt to secure it.

Doubtless he was satisfied that he had acted rashly.

Mike Jones indulged in a few sulphurous oaths after he had resumed his seat.

"I was mad!" said Jim, humbly enough now. "You goaded me to it, Mike."

"I'll goad you to something worse if you don't behave yourself, man. Another attempt like that, and I'll kill you," and another oath came by way of emphasis.

There was an aroused devil flaming from the eyes of the speaker. The serpent glow had given place to one of a more dangerous nature, and Jim shrugged his thin shoulders with an inward shudder.

"Don't, I beg of you."

"You must go slow then, hereafter."

"I will. As to your going away from the Marquette country, you surely do not mean that?"

"I do."

"And is the danger really so great?"

"I have not over-estimated it in the least."

"And you abandon the whole affair at this stage in the game?"

"I must."

"Then you will get nothing more from me."

"I think you mistake greatly."

"How so?"

"According to our agreement, I was to be handsomely rewarded for the work I have already performed."

"But you must remain until the game is played to the end—until Ward's millions are secured, and then your reward shall be great," asserted the mask, determinedly.

For some moments Mike Jones sat reflecting.

"I must have some money now, at any rate. I engineered the capture of William Armor, and if the officer of the law had amounted to a snap he would have been safely out of the way now."

"Better had he fallen into the hands of the mob."

"It would have been just the thing, and that's the way I had planned it. With Will dead, the search for the real assassin might cease. But I tell you, there's a long head working against us, and it's not Tom Tunnel, either. I can explain it only by believing that one of Pinkerton's men has taken up the trail."

"In that case you must thwart him."

"Well?"

"I will add a cool twenty thousand to the price if you settle this new factor in the case—that is, when the end is secured for which I have plotted."

"Correct!"

A sudden, triumphant glow shot into the eyes of Mike Jones, and he held out his hand.

"Shake on that, pard!"

They did so.

"Now, then, for present needs, I must have a couple of thousand."

"I haven't that amount with me."

"No; but you can place it where I can find it inside of twenty-four hours?"

"Yes."

"To me that will be satisfactory."

"And you will continue on the case?"

"To the death, pard."

"Then we understand each other once more."

Jim rose to his feet.

Mike Jones did likewise.

"I am sorry we have had any trouble, Mike."

"So am I."

"You will find this new trail-hunter, and put him where he can do no harm, and then see that Will is settled with for this awful crime."

"Certainly. Will is guilty, and must be punished."

The crook spoke with evident honesty, and Jim regarded him with a perplexed stare.

"Will is really guilty?"

"He is."

"You have so asserted before, and it has given me much relief. There are, in consequence, no stains on my hands," and a sigh reached the ear of the crook, that caused him to curl his lip scornfully.

"You forget Edward Caro!" with a sneering smile.

The mask started, then, and clutched at the edge of the table fiercely with one hand. The crook's shot had evidently struck home.

"Satan!" fell hissingly from the lips of Jim.

"Poor Edward!" uttered Mike, in a mocking tone, "he might have lived had he been less careless. There's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip, you know."

"Have done with this," cried the mask. "You seem to delight in raking up all the horrors imaginable. You ought to know that I had nothing to do with that affair; Dr. Anderson has that mistake to answer for."

"It was a mistake, indeed," chuckled the crook. "The wrong man took the medicine!"

"It matters not now; let us forget that," cried the mask. "Brighter skies there are in the future, I feel sure. Let

Edward Caro rest, since he was the victim of his own folly."

"I am willing, only I don't want you to feel so good over your stainless hands," laughed Mike. When the two walked to the entrance, Jones laid his hand on the shoulder of the mask, and said:

"When it is all over, Jim, I may know for whom I have been working; this is a part of the bargain."

"No," shortly.

"You mean never to show your face to me?"

"Never."

A low chuckle fell from Jones's lips. He bent his lips to the ear of the mask, and whispered a name that caused him to start and tremble visibly.

"I knew I was right."

Nothing more was said as the two passed out to the street.

Separating, the two passed their several ways.

The mask turned a corner, and, as we have seen him do on a former occasion, he sought one of the least frequented streets and hurried away.

Late that night a horseman entered Ishpeming by the wagon road from Marquette.

In the meantime Mike Jones turned his steps toward the lake.

"I have discovered the identity of the mask," he muttered, "and now I hold a full hand. Mike Jones, you're in luck. If this new trailer, the one who stole Will from the officers, was only at the bottom of the lake, I should feel a heap better. He assumes a good many disguises, one of which is that of Stiles, the tramp."

Thus soliloquizing, the crook made his way to a part of the city not exactly respectable.

A light flashing from the window of a low dive rested on the face of a man who was leaning forward, apparently trying to penetrate the window-shade through a rent, in which the light flashed.

One glance into the man's face caused the crook to start visibly. His teeth came together tightly, and the serpent gleam was intensified to his eyes.

"It is he—the tramp detective!"

Drawing a knife from his boot, the gambler crept with cat-like softness toward the unsuspecting man.

"I'll knife him, and drop the carcass in the lake!" was the mentally uttered thought of Mike Jones, as he crept toward Hiram Stiles.

Nearer and nearer the assassin crept.

His hand clenched the deadly knife, and his heart was steeled with its wicked purpose.

Hiram Stiles was now in the most dangerous spot of his life.

Would he escape unscathed from the assassin's blade?

It did not seem possible for him to do so.

Leaning forward, all unconscious of danger, the tramp stood listening to the sounds emanating from the saloon, and apparently unconscious of the conspicuousness of the position he occupied.

Of a sudden Stiles seemed to feel the presence of an enemy. He straightened up and turned partially about, just as the giant form of the gambler rose for the fatal spring, as a tiger upon his prey.

The one-eyed man realized his danger when too late.

With the force of a cannon ball, the giant crook hurled himself upon his victim.

Down went both men to the earth.

The giant gambler was atop, and his digits closed about the throat of Hiram Stiles, as he raised his knife for the fatal stroke

saloon outside, and he hoped to finish his man without a struggle.

This was his thought when he raised his knife to strike the fatal blow.

One of Stiles's long arms was not secured, and it came up, striking the would-be assassin's wrist a blow that sent the deadly knife flying from his hand.

A fearful execration fell from the lips of the murderous crook.

The struggle was now of a more equal nature.

Deprived of his knife, Mike Jones had now to depend on his hands. A pistol would prove too noisy a weapon.

With the digits of his left hand still clinging to the throat of Stiles, thus shutting off his wind, the gambler proceeded to deal vigorous blows with his fists at the countenance of his fallen foe.

"I'll fix you, you lank man-tracker!" hissed Jones, as he struck fiercely at the face of his half-strangled victim.

The gambler was more than a match for an ordinary man, and it seemed that Stiles was destined to get the worst of the conflict, when an unexpected help came.

From the corner of the saloon a dark figure darted, and with the bound of a catamount, landed squarely on the shoulders of the gambler.

Mike Jones at once realized his danger, and he rose to his feet with grating teeth, and the growl of an enraged tiger.

"Unhand me, you cursed scoundrel!"

But the last comer clung to the neck of the huge gambler with death-like tenacity.

At this critical moment the door of the low groggery opened, and a light streamed out upon the three men.

Stiles had now regained his feet, his face plainly revealed in the glow of the lamps from within.

The man who had leaped upon the back of the ponderous gambler uttered a low cry, and released his hold, going to the ground most quickly.

Several men came to the saloon door, and at that moment Mike Jones believed discretion the better part of valor. With a muttered imprecation he rushed away in the darkness.

The late-comer stood staring at Stiles, without the ability to move or utter a word, for some moments.

There was little wonder that he was surprised.

The black patch had been torn loose, and also a wig, and the unknown detective stood plainly revealed in the lamplight.

Tom Tunnel, for he it was, recognized the face, and he could not suppress an exclamation of wonder, cool detective he was.

Stiles seemed to understand the situation, and at once grasped the detective by the shoulder and drew him aside.

"Tom Tunnel, you recognize me?"

"Yes, by gracious! And—"

"Not a word," interrupted the man. "I meant to retain my disguise to the end. You are the only man in Marquette or Ishpeming who has discovered the identity of Hiram Stiles. You are a detective, and I depend on your keeping your knowledge from the public."

"I am astonished."

"No doubt," interrupted the other, dryly, "but I mean to surprise some others before I get through. The race of the unrighteous is nearing its end."

Stiles then walked back, and from the ground secured his disguise. Donning it once more, he rejoined Tom Tunnel.

The saloon door closed, and the half-inebriated inmates, on finding no officer near, lost curiosity in the sounds outside.

The two detectives stood in the darkness now.

They walked a little way, and then came to a halt where the stars of heaven gemmed the waters of the lake.

"Now, then, sir, explain yourself," exclaimed Tom Tunnel, bursting with curiosity.

"I can do so in a few words," answered Stiles.

For some time the two engaged in deep and earnest conversation.

At length Tunnel said:

"It was you, then, who rescued William Armor from prison and the mob?"

"It was."

"Where is Will now?"

"In a safe place."

"You deem him wholly innocent?"

"Once I did not. I am now satisfied."

"So am I," answered Tunnel. "This has been a puzzling case to me, Mr.—ah—Stiles."

"That's right. I am Hiram Stiles for the present; please not to forget that, Tom Tunnel."

"I will try and remember. How long have you been on this case?"

"About the same length of time you have—ever since the murder of Harry Ward, in fact."

"What discoveries have you made?"

"Enough to tear one person, at least, from a lofty perch," answered Stiles, dryly.

"I think my observations have led me to the same conclusion," said Tunnel. "By exchanging confidences, we may be the better able to accomplish the end we both seek."

"That is true."

"Have you an idea who the man was who assaulted you just now?"

"A crook—one of the vilest scoundrels in the copper region. His name is Mike Jones, and he hails from Chicago."

"You are well posted, I see," uttered Tunnel. "The scoundrel meant to kill you, I think."

"Undoubtedly. I owe my life to you."

"Speak of that at another time," said the detective, quickly. "I wish to know how much you have learned of this case. Will you answer a few questions?"

"If I can."

"Of course you are well acquainted with old man Arnold and his wife?"

"Of course; Will and I carried a wounded man there once."

"Yes, and I am bound to repay the kindness some time."

"Don't. We are quits now, Tom Tunnel."

"I am sorry I did not learn that you were on the trail sooner. I think, had we both worked in concert, arrests might have been made before this; but of course that can't be remedied now."

"Of course not. I have pursued the course I deemed best from the outset."

"I am sure of that," admitted Tom Tunnel. "Speaking of the Arnolds brings to mind the sudden death of Edward Caro. Do you know anything about that?"

"No, save only a theory."

"Well?"

"Murder was intended."

"You think Dr. Anderson did not make a mistake—that he prepared a dose for me?"

"No; I think, in fact, I know, that Dr. Anderson is entirely blameless in that affair. The poison was meant for you, and was prepared by one deeply interested in your removal."

"Exactly. Could you put your finger on the person?"

"I think so."

"Name him."

"Not now."

"You can trust me?"

"Yes; but the very air hath ears, and I will not even whisper to-night."

"You are very cautious."

"In this case it is necessary."

Tom Tunnel laughed.

"I think I'll have to take a back seat for you, Mr. Stiles. You're one of the keenest men I ever met."

To this the other made no reply. Evidently he was not pleased with the man's flattery.

"Arnold had nothing to do with the poisoned glass?" suddenly questioned Tom Tunnel.

"Nothing."

"My opinion exactly. I have one more question."

"Proceed."

"Who was the young man pretending to be the doctor's messenger?"

CHAPTER XXXI.

DETECTIVES IN COUNCIL.

The strange tramp realized his danger, and made a desperate effort to throw the big ruffian from him.

Mike Jones realized that an unusual noise would bring the inmates of the

CHAPTER XXXII.

A YOUNG WOMAN'S WRATH.

For some moments Stiles did not speak. Perhaps he was debating the propriety of telling all that he knew in the premises.

Tom Tunnel waited patiently for some time.

"Can you answer the question, Mr. Stiles?"

"I think I can."

"Well?"

"Tom Tunnel, I am of the opinion that it is best to keep my knowledge to myself for the present."

"As you like."

"Don't misunderstand me. It may be possible that I have made a mistake in some of my calculations. I wish to wrong no one, nor to strike prematurely; so, for the present, I am obliged to decline giving names."

A smile touched the face of Tom Tunnel.

"You have the caution of a true detective," he said; "and I admire you for it. I will ask no more questions."

"I wish you to help me all the same."

"I have pretty nearly fathomed the mystery, I believe," declared Tom.

"We had better work together."

"Certainly."

"I have assumed several disguises since I entered upon the unraveling of this case," proceeded Stiles, "and have learned many things that lead me to believe that a little strategy will place everything in our hands, and give Will an opportunity to return to Ishpeming in peace."

"I hope you may not be mistaken."

"I shall not be."

For some time longer the two conversed, and then they moved away.

At parting, Stiles said:

"Inside of a week all will be made clear. Will will be free before these people, and the criminals engaged in this monstrous plot brought to the bar of justice."

"I believe you," Tunnel assented.

* * * * *

Charles Stratton sat alone in his office when the door opened and a young girl confronted him.

It was Laura Ward.

Her cheeks were pale, and the blue eyes hot with the burning fever of excitement.

She had lost flesh and spirit during the past two months, brooding over the sad fate of her father, and perhaps suffering not a little in consequence of William Armor's misfortunes.

The stern, hard look that had rested on the face of Stratton all through the day softened, and a smile came to his lips when he saw who his visitor was.

Quickly he rose and pushed a large chair toward her.

She did not sink into it, as he expected.

"You are excited, Laura. I hope nothing has happened at the house out of the ordinary?"

"No. Look at that."

She handed him a copy of the Marquette Blower, containing the article inciting the people to mob law.

After glancing at it, he looked into Laura's face.

"I have seen it before."

"I am aware of that."

"Ah!"

"Your hand indited that infamous article!" asserted the girl, with wrath. "If Will is killed, you will be his murderer, Charles Stratton!"

"Calm yourself, my dear Laura."

"I am quite calm, sir. Do you deny writing that article?"

"Certainly I do, although I quite approve of the sentiments it puts forth," he said, coolly.

"Then you are an infamous scoundrel!"

"Laura!"

"It is true. I will not take back the truth. You would be glad to see Will torn by a mob—murdered—that he may be out of your way forever!"

The girl's pale cheeks were flushed

now, and a resentful fire flamed in her blue eyes.

Charles Stratton was quite dumfounded.

For weeks he had been on his best behavior before Laura, anxious to win her highest esteem, that he might, in the end, win her for his wife.

Present indications were not hopeful of success.

Laura was usually one of the mildest mannered women in the world.

She was roused, now, however, and Charles Stratton realized it keenly.

"My dear Laura—"

"Stop! I won't listen to hypocritical pleading," protested the girl, interrupting him. "If Will falls a victim to the mad passions of the mob, you will be a murderer, and, as sure as heaven, I will see that you are indicted as such."

Then she turned, and would have rushed from the room but for the detaining hand of Mr. Stratton. He held her gently, and said:

"You are quite beside yourself, Laura. I cannot permit you to go upon the street in this dangerous mood."

"Sir, unhand me!" flashed hotly from the maiden's lips.

"Not until you calm yourself."

"I will call for help."

"Laura, are you mad?"

"Very near it!"

"Listen to me—to reason. You must not undertake to stem the tide of public sentiment. The people are justly enraged at the death of your father, and it would be a wonder if they would permit the assassin to escape if he came into their hands."

Laura flashed a hot, keen glance into the face of her late father's partner.

He recoiled before that glance.

At length she spoke.

"Charles Stratton, I am not blind. I have learned more than you imagine."

"No doubt."

"I have learned enough to convince me that Will is a persecuted man, and that the real murderer is much nearer home."

"What do you mean?"

Laura's eyes were still riveted on the face of Stratton, much to his disgust.

"I mean that Will is to be made the victim of the real assassin!"

"You startle me."

"No doubt I do. Charles Stratton, who murdered my father?"

This blunt question was unexpected, but Mr. Stratton realized the need of self-command, and although a deadly pallor sat upon his face he was outwardly calm.

"I cannot answer your question, Laura. I can only state what I believe."

"Well?"

"Of course I can see no evidence that does not point to one person only."

"And that person?"

"William Armor."

"I knew you would say that, but you do not speak your honest convictions. In your heart you know better, Charles Stratton."

A deep red shot suddenly into his cheeks, as he said:

"You are pleased to insult me, Miss Ward, and I can only bear with you for the sake of the good man gone and for love of you. I am willing to suffer for the good that may come hereafter."

Laura essayed to move away.

"Where would you go, Laura?"

"To Marquette. The train will soon leave for the East."

"You must not go."

Just then a messenger boy entered and handed Mr. Stratton an envelope. Laura waited while he tore it open and read it.

He then handed it to her, his countenance scarcely changing.

It was a telegram, and from Marquette.

"Mr. Stratton.—William Armor, the murderer, has escaped by a trick. Look out for him in your city."

"Sheriff Mahoney."

A smile touched the face of Laura as

she returned the bit of paper to Mr. Stratton.

"Laura, what will you do now?"

"I shall not go to Marquette," she answered, with a strange elation in her voice.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A PROCLAMATION FROM HIDING.

Several days passed, with no new developments. Tom Tunnel and the unknown detective were silently at work, and, judging from the pleased look resting on the face of Tunnel, he was making rapid progress toward a solution of the mysteries surrounding the tragedy of the lake.

The gold harpoon had troubled him not a little, but he had now cast that aside in making up his verdict. He had a theory regarding that not inconsistent with Will Armor's innocence.

Tunnel was often in consultation with Stiles.

The two were preparing to spring a trap that was destined to surprise the public.

Will still remained at liberty, although men were on the lookout for him throughout the two cities of Marquette, Ishpeming and vicinity.

It would be a wonder if the young Detroitier escaped a second time.

The excitement instead of dying out daily increased. There were those not wanting in influence who fanned the flame of mad passions continuously.

Such men exist in all communities.

Had Will fallen into the hands of the two communities, his fate would have been decided without judge or jury.

It was this knowledge that urged the two detectives to harmonious and rapid action.

They stood together one evening in a small room of the principal hotel at Ishpeming.

Both were in disguise, and were not known in their true characters, even by the proprietor of the hotel himself.

"Will cannot remain in hiding much longer," Stiles remarked.

"It doesn't seem possible."

"No. He will eventually be discovered, and with the present state of feeling, his chances would be mighty slim."

"I am aware of that. What would you advise?"

"The immediate arrest of Mike Jones."

"That is easier said than done."

"Naturally, yet it is easy enough done," asserted Hiram Stiles. "You have evidence against him sufficient to place him in durance vile."

"Certainly, but I have had suspicions regarding him and this mysterious Jim, and wished to give him rope to hang himself with."

"Well, he has had the rope?"

"Yes," admitted Tunnel.

"And has not hanged himself?"

"No."

"Yet it was best to shut down on his career. I have a plan that will work, I am sure. There is a conspiracy among certain ones with which Mike Jones is connected. He must be quietly arrested, without the knowledge of his superiors, when it will be easy to lead them into a trap."

"I am listening."

Thereupon the unknown detective entered into a complete explanation of the situation, as he understood it, and his plan of proceeding against the members who had been spotted.

"By gracious! you're a trump, Stiles!" exclaimed Tom Tunnel, wringing the hand of his companion warmly. "There's no such word as fail now. Will shall be free, and Laura happy inside of a week."

"You are extremely sanguine."

"No more than the case warrants."

"I hope not, at any rate," said Stiles.

"Jones flits between this city and Marquette frequently."

"True," answered Stiles.

"He is in this town now."

"I am aware of that; he was at the Ward mansion last night."

"No?" exclaimed Tom Tunnel in amazement.

"It's a fact. I shadowed him."

"Ah, then you doubtless discovered something of importance?"

"I call it so."

"Let me hear it. No secrets from each other after this, remember, Mr. Stiles," urged Tunnel. "Remember, we're not rivals in the detective business, but working to the same end."

"Yes, that is true," admitted Stiles. "Maybe it would be as well to confide everything to you. Together we may work to better advantage."

"Yes, it would have been better so from the start."

"Perhaps it would."

Stiles then unbosomed himself still further, and when the two left the room to go their respective ways they had arrived at a perfect understanding.

Tom Tunnel went down to the office, while Stiles left the hotel by a side entrance.

When the detective entered he noticed considerable excitement among the men congregated there.

"Mighty cool cuss, anyhow."

It was the landlord who offered this remark.

"It beats the devil," said a tall, lean man, with the red dust of the mines still clinging to his garments, "I used to know Will. He's a corker, and don't you forgit it, boys!"

"What seems to be the trouble now?" queried Tunnel.

"It's that infernal William Armor again."

"What!—have the officers captured the wretch?"

"No. Here's what's the racket."

A gentleman present handed Tom Tunnel a copy of the *Bloucer*, that had just come in on the train.

The detective looked at the article pointed out and read:

"To the Public: I have not resisted the lawful authority of the State of Michigan from any desire to escape from justice fairly administered. As an innocent man, I am anxious that the murderer of Mr. Ward should be secured, but I am not ready to lay down my life at the behest of a mob, excited, perhaps, by the guilty parties of this crime. If the authorities will grant me protection, so that justice and not lynch-law shall prevail, I am ready and anxious to surrender myself. I must have guarantees that I shall be safe from the mob; then I am ready to surrender. An answer to this in the columns of this paper will reach me. Gentlemen, what will you do? I only ask what is right."

"William Armor."

Tom Tunnel's face failed to evince the surprise the reading of this announcement occasioned. What did it mean?

Was William Armor really the author?

It seemed a little strange that Will should resort to the columns of the same paper that so bitterly denounced him a few days before to address the public.

"What do you think of it?" asked the gentleman who had placed the paper in Tunnel's hand.

"It may be a hoax," was the evasive reply.

"But if it is not?"

"Then I must say that the man's demand is a most reasonable one. He has a right to expect protection, and were I mayor of Marquette, he should have it, at whatever cost."

"By gracious! I believe you're right."

"You bet!" put in the lean man lately from the mines. "Ef the government can't protect a prisoner, it had better give up the ghost. I go in for fair-play, every time."

"That's what's the matter."

"The young feller may be innocent—there's no tellin'."

Such were the remarks that greeted the reading of the letter given to the public by the outlawed Detroitier.

Tom Tunnel had little doubt but what Will would be safer with the authorities of Ishpeming than with those of the neighboring city.

A little later he passed upon the street and turned his steps toward the Ward mansion. Before he reached it, he felt a hand upon his shoulder.

Turning, he looked into a pair of gleaming eyes, cunning eyes, with the venom of a serpent in their depths.

"Tom Tunnel, you die to-night, unless you leave the copper region at once, and forever!" were the words dropped in the detective's ear.

Who uttered them?

Several people jostled against the detective.

An old woman with a market-basket on her arm, her face nearly hidden by a poke-bonnet, passed. Tunnel peered under the bonnet, and saw the gleam of those wicked eyes once more!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE CHICAGO CROOK IN THE TOILS.

The seeming old woman was certainly his old enemy, Mike Jones.

He it was who had sent that hissing warning into his ear, and on the impulse of the moment Tom Tunnel sprang forward and seized the woman's arm tightly.

"Oh, sir, let me go!"

The woman wheeled about and stared blankly into the face of the detective.

An oath fell from the lips of Tom Tunnel.

At the same moment a low, mocking laugh fell on his ears.

It came from the rear.

Tunnel dropped his hand from the woman's arm and turned about.

Again he saw those gleaming eyes through the semi-gloom, but now a man's broad-brimmed hat shaded them and a huge black beard swept beneath.

It was Mike Jones, there could be no doubt of that now; but when Tom Tunnel attempted to hurry forward he collided with a swift-moving footman, and nearly knocked the breath from his body.

"A thousand pardons, sir," gasped the stranger, when he gained breath enough to articulate.

"It doesn't matter."

The detective looked after that in vain for the gambler.

He was puzzled to know how the villain penetrated his disguise.

"Mike Jones is one of the sharpest chaps I ever met," muttered the detective. "He still chooses to indulge in threats. The scoundrel ought to know that he cannot frighten me. Another four-and-twenty hours will wind up his career, anyhow."

Tom Tunnel and Stiles had planned the arrest of the Chicago crook on the following evening, and it was of this the detective was thinking just then.

Would the sharp-witted rascal fall into the trap?

We shall presently see.

It was just after darkness had fallen, on the following evening, that a stalwart-looking miner left an obscure dwelling in the poorer part of the city of Ishpeming and wended his way toward the busier part of the town.

He had gone but a little way when he heard a voice calling:

"Say, sir!"

He looked about and flashed a sharp look into the speaker's face.

A small boy, with ragged jacket and bare feet, held up a letter to the gaze of the stout man.

"What is it, bub?" the miner demanded, rather sharply.

"This," shaking the letter. "Who's the man it belongs ter?"

The huge man seized the envelope.

"To Mr. Jackson—Jericho."

"That's my name."

The urchin held out his hand.

"Gimme ten cents."

The man did so, paying no heed to the boy as he scampered away.

"Now, then, what does this mean?"

The big man halted where the light from a window touched the street, tore open his letter, and held the written page up to the faint light.

"Jones: News of importance; must see you to-night. Come at ten to number 16 Blank street. I will be there to admit you. Don't fail. Jim."

"Well, by Judas! what's up now?" muttered the seeming miner, who was really Mike Jones, the gambler.

"Jim has news of importance, eh? Well, I think it's about time. I'd like the handling of some of old Ward's dollars right away."

Thus muttering, the gambler thrust the letter into an inner pocket and hastened away.

He soon gained the business part of the city, sauntered to the bar and called for brandy.

After drinking he went to one of the tables and sat down.

Being a miner, he was supposed to have money, and he was not long in being "roped in" for a game of cards.

How he came out it is not necessary for the reader to know.

At a quarter before ten Jones sprang up and left the saloon.

"Now for number 16 Blank street," he muttered.

He found the place after a half-hour's search.

A rather pretentious-looking building, not far from the railroad.

All was dark about the place, save for the dim light that shone from a small window beside the main entrance.

The inmates of the building had evidently retired to rest. Over the door the gambler discovered the number sixteen, and knew that this was the spot named in Jim's note.

Was the gambler suspicious that all was not right? If so, he did not exhibit his feelings.

He walked boldly up the steps and rapped. For fully a minute all was silent.

Tap-tap-tap!

This time the door was pushed open the least bit, and a voice said:

"Is that you, Jackson?"

"Yes."

"From Jericho?"

"Yes."

"Come in."

The door was opened, and Mike Jones passed inside. Quickly the door swung to and was bolted.

"This way."

The gambler followed his guide into a side room, where a dim light was burning on a small table.

"Sit down, Mike. It's business to-night."

The gambler sank into a chair.

The man who had admitted him followed suit.

The last man was masked, seeming the same person who has figured in these pages as Jim.

Nevertheless the gambler was not entirely at ease.

The two men glared at each other sharply.

"Well?" said Jones.

"Well?" remarked the man in mask.

"You sent for me, Jim, on important business?"

"I did," answered the masked man. "The time for action has come."

"For action?"

"Yes. Tom Tunnel is hot after us, and there is but one way to save our bacon."

"And that?"

"We must arrest the man who murdered Harry Ward."

"Eh? You speak of William Armor?"

"No."

"Who then?"

"Of the man who plunged a dagger into the heart of an unsuspecting man, and flung him into the lake, on the night of the 13th of May last. Mike Jones, I arrest you for the murder of Harry Ward!"

Then was witnessed a startling scene. Both men came to their feet like a flash.

The gambler was not wholly off his guard, and he whipped out his revolver on the instant. His temple was pressed

by a ring of cold steel, however, and he dared not raise his hand.

"Drop that weapon or die!"

Thus hissed the man in mask.

The man's voice had suddenly changed, and the gambler recognized it at once.

"Tom Tunnel!"

With this exclamation, Mike Jones reeled backward, his revolver going to the floor with a clang.

"Stiles, do your duty."

The one-eyed man appeared, and with an expert movement clasped handcuffs over the gambler's wrists.

The detective then removed his mask.

"The game's up, Mr. Jones," uttered Tom Tunnel, with a dry laugh.

A low-muttered oath alone answered the speaker.

The outlaw gambler was completely cowed.

"I was a cussed fool to run into such a bold trap," he muttered. "But you fool yourself, old man, when you accuse me of sending old Ward out of the world. William Armor is the man; I can swear to that, for I saw him do it!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

GATHERING IN THE CROOK HARVEST.

"Too thin," sneered Tom Tunnel. "We don't expect you to confess your crimes, but the proof will fix you."

The baffled and cowed gambler retained a dogged silence after this.

Tom knew the fellow of old, and did not expect to win confession from him.

Tunnel led his prisoner outside, and placed him in charge of two officers, determined men, whom the detective had specially employed for the occasion.

"You will return at once, after seeing this gentleman to a safe lodging-room," he informed them.

"More of 'em, captain?"

"Yes."

"All right."

The detective returned to the room he had quitted.

Stiles was there, in full disguise.

"One infamous scoundrel is on his way to prison," remarked Tom. "I hope we shall be as successful with the other."

"I am confident we shall be," answered Stiles.

"But suppose Jim fails to come to time?"

"Then we must move on his stronghold."

"Where?"

"Wait; you shall soon know."

"At the hour of eleven, you tell me."

"Yes, look for the man in mask at that time, and he may not come alone."

"Who will keep him company?"

"Have patience, Tom."

"I will endeavor to."

The detective consulted his watch; it lacked but a quarter of eleven.

With what impatience the two men waited may be imagined. They were on the eve of a great revelation—on the threshold of important work.

Would their hopes be realized?

To be thwarted now would be indeed most provoking, when everything had been skillfully arranged for the seizure of the criminals.

Suddenly Tom Tunnel held up his watch.

"See, it is past the hour!" he said in a whisper. "Jim will not come. Your little plot has failed, Mr. Stiles."

"Wait!" calmly enjoined the one-eyed man.

A short and painful silence; and then the sound of a step came to their hearing. Rat-tat-tat!

"Jim has come," uttered Tom, gliding quickly to the outer door.

* * * * *

It was late in the afternoon, and Charles Stratton was on the point of departing from his office, when his chief clerk—the man secured to fill the place lately occupied by Edward Caro—entered and laid a sealed letter on the mine-owner's desk.

Then the clerk withdrew.

"Charles Stratton, Esq., City."

The capitalist glanced sharply at the chirography.

It was new to him, but as it was no uncommon thing for him to receive letters from strangers, he thought nothing of it.

Sinking back into his easy chair, the millionaire opened the missive.

A puzzled look came into his face as he read:

"Mr. Stratton: Call at No. 16 Blank street, at eleven this evening, and you will learn something to your advantage. It is regarding the will left by the late Harry Ward. Say nothing of this to any one, not even to your relatives. It is of the utmost importance that you be on hand at the appointed hour. You will never regret it.

"Henry Jackson, Attorney."

"Henry Jackson," muttered the millionaire. "I don't remember the gentleman."

For some moments Mr. Stratton sat, in reflection.

"Henry Jackson," he again muttered. Then he read the letter again.

"Singular epistle, that," he mused, contracting his brows. "Peculiar business, too, it seems. About the will left by my partner. He left no will. What can the man mean? I don't understand it at all. It may be a plan to extort money; if so, I'll nip the gentleman's little scheme in the bud."

A moment later the millionaire walked into the outer room of the office.

"Mr. Weber, where did you get this?" holding up the missive as he spoke—"this letter you just gave me?"

"A young fellow came in and tossed it on the desk just a few minutes ago."

"Did you know him?"

"I did not."

Mr. Stratton went back to his office.

The import of the letter worried him not a little.

"I don't understand it at all," he repeated. "Mr. Ward made no will. This must be a put-up job. At any rate I'll show this Jackson that I am not afraid of this bugbear he holds up. I'll pay no attention whatever."

Shortly after the millionaire left the office and walked homeward.

When he entered the presence of his sister he had it on his mind to speak of the letter, and permit her to read it and pass judgment.

Of a sudden he remembered that the note expressly warned him against speaking on the subject to any of his relatives. Why this caution? Thoughts of the will were uppermost in the partner's mind, and he did not show the communication to his sister.

After supper Mr. Stratton repaired to his office once more, when the chief clerk placed a second letter in his hand.

One glance at the superscription caused Stratton to start and hurry within his own private room.

He recognized the chirography.

"Henry Jackson again," he muttered as he sank into a chair and tore open the envelope with nervous haste.

"Mr. Stratton: Remember the hour; eleven P. M., and the number, 16 Blank street. You must not fail."

To this there was no signature, but the same hand indited it that wrote the other; this was evident.

"The fellow is certainly very anxious," muttered Stratton. "I had about made up my mind not to go, but perhaps it would be best. I confess that I am curious to know what the fellow wants. Upon the whole, I think I will visit Blank street at eleven. I shall go armed, and ready to thwart any villany."

Now, to return to our friends on Blank street.

When Tom Tunnel, who had resumed his disguise, opened the outer door, a man stepped at once into the hall.

"This way."

Tom Tunnel led the way to a side room, where a light was burning.

"Sit down."

Jim sank into a chair.

The detective did likewise, and fixed his keen glance on the masked face before him.

Both men were in mask.

Jim seemed ill at ease.

"What does this mean?" he demanded, sharply.

"I expected to meet Jones. Did he not send for me?"

"You will see him presently; meantime, I will endeavor to entertain you."

"Who are you?"

"Wait."

Tom sprang to his feet, and uttered a low whistle.

Instantly several men filed into the room, and surrounded the two. At their head was the odd-looking Hiram Stiles, the tramp.

Jim came to his feet, trembling like a leaf.

Evidently he was fully aware that he had run into a trap. His hand fell to the butt of a revolver, and his keen eyes glanced toward the door.

Two men stood there with their backs against it, and a feeling of despair entered the heart of Jim.

"Pard, the game's played," remarked Tom, complacently.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CYCLONE STRIKES! A STARTLING SURPRISE!

"Betrayed!" and with the word Jim raised his pistol, the muzzle against his own temple!

Quick as was the movement, it was not soon enough to accomplish the purpose of the baffled villain, for Tom, on guard, seized and wrenched the weapon from the desperate man's hand, just as his finger pressed the trigger.

A sharp report followed, but the bullet was imbedded in the wall, harming no one.

Like a tiger at bay, the masked villain glared about on the faces surrounding him.

"Pard, the game is up!" repeated Tunnel. "The man you hired to drive the dagger to the heart of Harry Ward is even now in prison, where you soon will be. I have proof enough to convict you of the crime."

"Who are you?" again asked Jim.

The detective removed his mask.

"Tom Tunnel!"

"And now no doubt those present would be glad to know who *you* are," added Hiram Stiles, stepping quickly to the side of the astounded Jim.

"Hold!"

The cry and remonstrance came too late.

Mask and wig were torn from the head and face of the villain, revealing one whom but two present expected to see.

An exclamation fell from the lips of all.

Before them stood "Jim" unmasked—Jim no more, but—

"Grace Stratton!"

"Aye!" answered Stiles, as the woman shrank back, her face blanched to the hue of death. "I have known for a long time who was masquerading under the name of Jim. I unmasked her one night, and learned to my horror that Grace Stratton was a base plotter, if not a murderess."

No one offered to interrupt the speaker, and he proceeded:

"For weeks I have dogged the steps of three persons in Ishpeming, myself hidden under various disguises. I have listened, in all sorts of places, until I learned the whole particulars of a deep-laid, diabolical plot, formed for the ruin of one family, for the purpose of building up another."

At this stage in the proceedings Grace, quite overcome, sank into the chair, but kept her eyes riveted, as though fascinated, on the face of Hiram Stiles.

Occasionally a convulsive shudder would pass through her frame.

"Proceed," ordered Tunnel.

"I will go back to the night of the

13th of May," resumed Stiles. "On that night the atrocious plot culminated. During the day William Armor and Mr. Ward quarreled. That evening, while the mine-owner stood by the rail, smoking, Will came to him; and attempted to mollify the old man. It did not work. Hot words followed, and Will rushed away.

"A few moments later a man approached. The millionaire thought it was Will. 'Old man,' said the fellow, 'I said that you would repent of your insults; take that!' With the words he plunged a dagger into Ward's breast, and, seizing him, flung him over the rail. 'Ward cried out, 'Will, Will, don't kill me!' The cry came too late, and Ward went to his doom, believing that Will Armor had slain him."

Considerable sensation was manifested as the narrator came to a pause, the gaze of that piercing single eye upon Grace Stratton. He then proceeded:

"Nevertheless, Will was innocent. The man who did the deed was Mike Jones, the hired tool of Grace Stratton, who cowers yonder."

"It—it is false!" stammered the woman. "I—"

"Stop! Wait until I am through, wretched woman! Then I will listen to your defense, if you have one to make. I have shadowed Jones, the masked Jim, and Charles Stratton, for weeks. When the three little suspected it I have been at their very elbows, listening. The plot was this, and the most of it was concocted by the brain of that woman: To remove Ward and have Stratton marry his daughter, when the whole of the Ward millions would come into possession of the Strattons. It was a cunningly devised plot. Mike Jones took passage from Detroit on the boat with Ward and his daughter, his purpose being to murder the mine-owner, and consign his body to the lake, and Stratton—brother and sister—were to reward him for the deed!"

"Again I say your story is false."

"On the contrary, it is true, and I have the evidence. Your plot has failed, Grace Stratton. Jones is in prison and your brother is now in the hands of officers!"

Stiles stamped his foot loudly.

At once two men entered, one of them the redoubtable Gallagher, leading between them Charles Stratton, in irons.

"My soul! this is terrible!" moaned Grace, as she looked into the pallid face of her brother.

"This is an outrage!" grated Stratton.

"Calm yourself, my dear fellow," urged Stiles. "Your plot to ruin William Armor and win a fortune for yourself has failed. The prison walls will close about you and your demon sister."

"Bah!"

A cold sneer curled the lip of the mine-owner.

"You cannot sneer it down; I have hunted you to your doom. Look!"

The tramp detective removed the black patch; then he cast aside his disguise, and stood revealed in his own proper person.

More than one exclamation filled the room. Even Tom Tunnel would have been astounded but for his fore-knowledge.

"Harry Ward! The lake hath given up its dead!"

Grace Stratton fell to the floor in a dead swoon.

* * * * *

"Yes, the lake had given up its dead, and the trail of the millionaire man-hunter was at an end. Grace and Charles Stratton were thrown into prison, and William Armor was free to show himself once more.

The story of the Mysterious Detective can be told in a few words.

The wound inflicted by the knife of Jones was a mere trifle, the blade having glanced on the breast-bone. Ward found one of the floats thrown out by the crew of the Lake Queen, and clung

to it until picked up ten hours later by a passing schooner. A desire to secure the punishment of his assassin induced him to conceal his identity under an assumed name. He was landed at Saginaw, and from there made his way back to the copper regions in disguise.

He believed that William Armor was guilty of attempting his life, but of this he was not positive, and so he resolved to play the detective and make sure of his premises. In his heart he liked Will, although a foolish pride had prevented his acknowledging it.

The result of his secret investigations soon let new light upon his brain. He found a new trail, that led to the very heart of his own household, with the result already noted.

Grace Stratton, broken in spirit, made a full confession, implicating Jones and herself, but exonerating her brother, who, she asserted, was not in the plot. The man who carried the poison to Arnold's, pretending to be the doctor's messenger, was Grace Stratton, in disguise, as the reader had no doubt guessed.

The Chicago Crook and his fair employer were both convicted, and sentenced to twenty years each in Jackson prison. The latter, however, never left the upper peninsula. She died of a fever shortly after her incarceration.

As for Charles Stratton, he was tried and acquitted, but a black suspicion hung over him, and he left the country, never to return, broken in purse and spirit.

Mr. Ward concluded that Will possessed true manly worth, and, after his wonderful experience, concluded that Will should take the place vacated by Stratton, and as his son-in-law.

As to the golden harpoon, it was stolen from Will, as he had asserted, and it was the thief's body, recovered from the water, that has played the part of Harry Ward's corpse in this story. How the man came to drown no one could say. Doubtless in his dying struggles he tore the pin from his own breast.

As might be conjectured, Mr. Ward handsomely rewarded Tom Tunnel for his faithful efforts, although he very naturally credited himself with having performed as important a part in the great case as Tunnel, while carrying out his role of

"A Detective in Mask!"

THE END.

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